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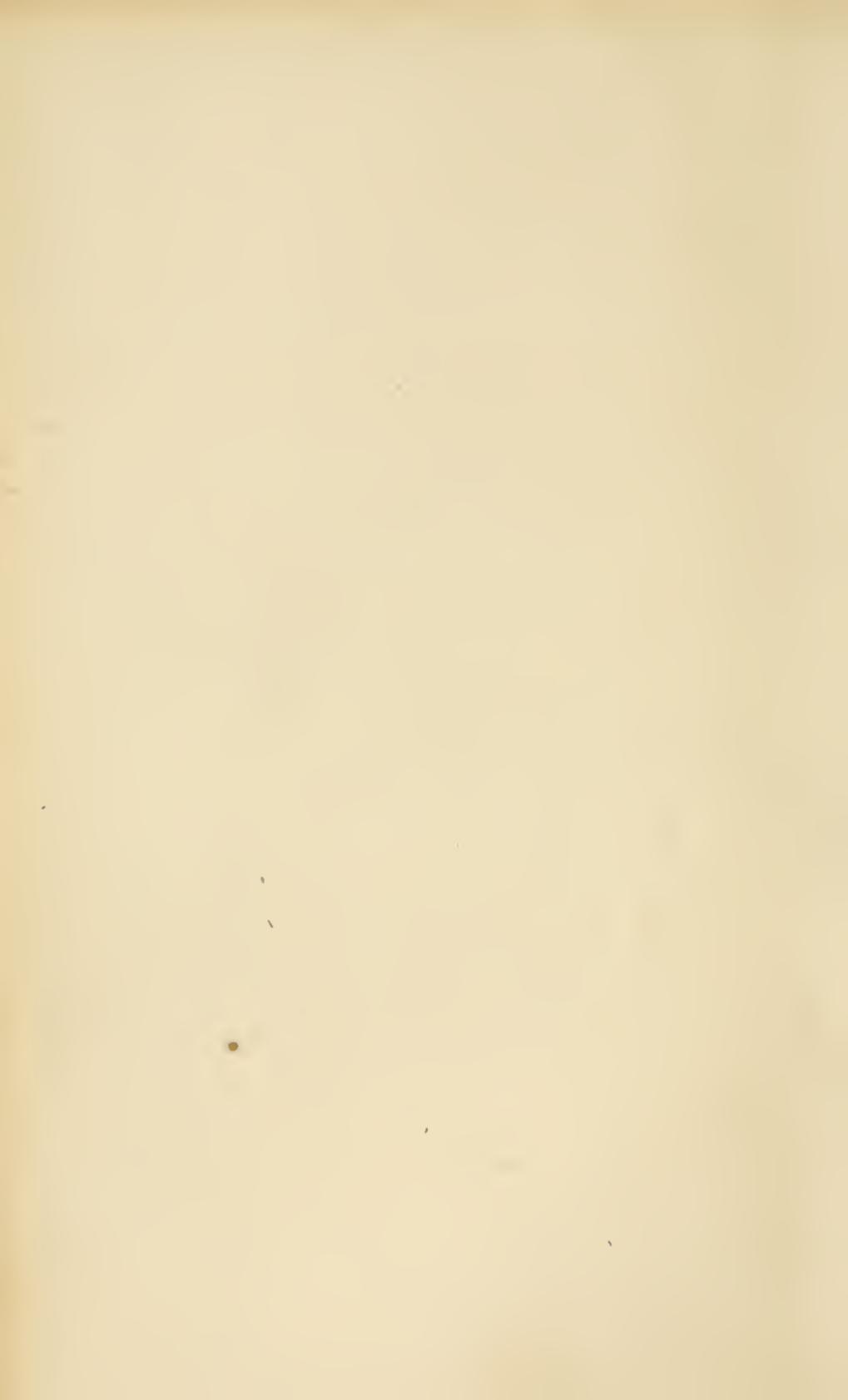
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LECTURES

ON

FEMALE SCRIPTURE CHARACTERS.

BY WILLIAM  JAY.

AUTHOR OF THE "MORNING AND EVENING EXERCISES," ETC.

"Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain ; but a woman that feareth
the Lord, she shall be praised."

"Who can find a virtuous woman ? for her price is far above rubies."

BOOK OF PROVERBS.

NEW YORK:
ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,
No. 285 BROADWAY.

1854.

STEREOTYPED BY
THOMAS B. SMITH.
216 William St., N. Y.

PRINTED BY
E. O. JENKINS,
114 Nassau St.

DEDICATION.

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE
THE DOWAGER COUNTESS OF DUCIE.

MADAM,

INFLUENCED and encouraged by my knowledge of your character, and by the friendship you have shown me, I never, for a moment, thought of the publication of the following Lectures, without the desire and the purpose of inscribing them to your Ladyship.

I have no relish for the common, fulsome, servile Dedications, which equally degrade their autho^rs, and disgrace their receivers. I avail myself of Elihu's declaration: "I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing, my Maker would soon take me away."

But I dedicate this work to your Ladyship, in token of my full persuasion—that you realize in your experience what it pleads for in doctrine—that you exemplify in your practice what it enjoins as duty—and that, while many in superior life desecrate their rank, talents, and influence in the service of pride, dissipation, and vice, you consecrate all by which you are distinguished to the honor of God, and the service of your generation :—and, therefore, that such a character is entitled to public notice and respect, as well as to the acknowledgments of private regard and esteem.

Your Ladyship has been recently visited with a loss, the magnitude of which it would be difficult to express.

In the lamented death of Earl Ducie, has been removed the singularly attached husband ; the tender father of a large and noble family ; the delight of his friends and acquaintances ; the praise of his neighborhood ; and the subject of a widened fame in the country of which he was the ornament and benefactor.

It would not, perhaps, be easy to find another in the same elevated sphere, so free from prejudice and bigotry ; so firm in the essentials, and so tolerant in the circumstantial of religion ; so open

and fearless in the profession of the Truth as it is in Jesus; so abhorrent of hypocrisy, formalism, and cant; so attached to the Sacred Volume; so concerned for its diffusion; so regardful of the poor, and so anxious for their instruction.

It must be a source of much consolation, and gratitude, that the solemn dispensation has been accompanied with such displays of Divine goodness and grace in the experience of the deceased; and that your Ladyship, under the mighty pressure, has been not only sustained, but resigned, and enabled to say, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good."

That the memory of one, so dear to your Ladyship, may be blessed; that his example may be followed; that instead of the father may be the children; and that you may find the God whom you serve to be "a Judge of the widows, in His holy habitation;"—and in your own;

Is the Prayer of

Your Ladyship's

Much obliged Friend and Servant,

Wm. JAY.

PERCY PLACE, BATH,
December 1853.

P R E F A C E .

WHEN, after a long and painful illness, I recovered a degree of ability for labor, though quite unequal to any kind of *public* service, I thought, that in order to be not wholly useless, I might do a little in some other way. For this purpose I began to look over sundry of my old manuscripts. Among them I found a number of Lectures which I had delivered more than forty-eight years ago. They proved to be on the Female Biography of the Old and New Testament Scriptures; and were occasioned, at the time, by my reflecting on the importance of female character, and on the influence which women must naturally and necessarily have, in every condition, period, and relation in life; so that if good should be done to *them*, good would be done to *many*, in a very wide and varied degree.

But I was also aware of the difficulty and delicacy of addressing women from the pulpit *distinctively*. With regard to *them*, praise, though deserved, might seem flattery; while just reproof might be construed into common-place reflection on the sex.

But in commenting on absent characters, indelibly portrayed ages back, I saw that a preacher might feel himself unfettered; and be able to deal *freely* with female excellencies and faults, leaving the application to the consciences and the discretion of his present audience.

These Lectures I delivered on Sabbath evenings, from short notes; but afterwards, as soon as possible, while the subjects were fresh in my recollection, I wrote them at full length, or nearly so.

This was the case with all of them except the Lectures on the Poor Widow, on the Elect Lady, and on the Mother of our Lord. The two former of these were, indeed, so far written out that I have recently been able, with tolerable ease, to complete them; but those (for I had *five*) on the Virgin Mary, had been left in so very imperfect a state, that I found it was too much for me to think of filling them up at that time.

Though indisposition, and various interruptions prevented me for awhile, I hoped for some future leisure moments, when I might recover and transcribe what I had delivered on this extraordinary personage; but, alas! the moments never came, or came in vain.

I lament this, as I had thought much on the subject; and had wished to steer between the

idolatries of the Romish Church, and the excessive fears of some Protestants, which have betrayed them into a degree of the opposite extreme.

The first Lecture turned upon Mary's descent, her condition in life, and her maternity: the second, on the salutation of the angel, her visit to Elizabeth, and her song: the third, on her deliverance and purification: the fourth, on her residence at Nazareth, her finding her son among the doctors in the temple, and her conduct at the marriage in Cana of Galilee: the last, on her attendance at the cross, her being committed to the care of John, and her appearance in an upper room at Jerusalem with the eleven Apostles.

Here would have been much to observe, much to wonder at, much to admire, much to imitate, but nothing to deify. She was doubtless a wise, pious, much-honored character; but she was not free from human infirmities: entitled to great respect and veneration, but not to adoration and worship.

Let me add, by way of advertisement to my readers;—

That my plan was not to comprehend even all the more remarkable females noticed in the sacred writings; but to make such a selection from them as I thought might be rendered interesting and useful:—

That, notwithstanding the avowed purpose of

these Lectures, I never intended to regard my female hearers so exclusively, as to have nothing for other attendants:—

That, as to females themselves, my aim was not only to render them amiable, and prudent, and useful; but also “partakers of the benefit,” and “heirs of the grace of life:”—

That, as I could not be satisfied without, in some measure, evangelizing my subject; for this purpose, I included several individuals, not so much as examples of female manners and virtues, as instances of the freeness and power of divine grace:—

And that as the characters lectured upon were independent of each other, I did not treat them in the order of their occurrence in the Scriptures; but in the order in which they excited and impressed my own mind. In like manner, with regard to the perusal, no advantage is lost by the want of consecutiveness in the arrangement. They are thus furnished by the sacred writers themselves.

PERCY PLACE, BATH,
December 1853.

. While the last sheet of this work was passing through the press, the venerable Author was summoned to his rest. He died on Tuesday, December 27, 1853; aged 84. “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.”

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PART I.

And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people.

2 KINGS, iv. 13.

LORD BACON has remarked, that the Bible is like the land of Canaan, which flowed with *milk* and *honey*; or, like the Garden of Eden, where the Lord God caused to grow out of the ground every tree that was *pleasant* to the sight, and *good* for food. The remark is as true as it is striking, and the more we examine the sacred volume, the more we shall perceive that it abounds not only with the nourishing but the delicious—not only with the profitable but the delightful. Its communications improve us while they entertain, and entertain us while they improve.

Take the historical narratives. In these there is a charm which it is impossible fully to describe. Yet who has not perceived it? Who does not, when reading, feel a certain quality, which, while it serves to demonstrate the truth of the facts, seizes, engrosses, enchains his attention?

One cause of this effect is, that the relation always states things just as they occurred, with the minute circumstances of time, place, and manner ; and states them so naturally, that they are rendered present, and seem to strike not only our imagination, but our very senses. We find ourselves witnesses—we are parties concerned. What is related is so plain in language, that a child can understand it, and so replete with importance, that a preacher may derive pages and volumes of instruction from it.

Nothing exemplifies this observation more than the narrative we are now going to review ; for who ever read it once that did not wish to read it again and again ?—It is the history of the Shunamite.

We are told “She was a great woman.” She was possessed of some considerable rank and fortune. But what are claims merely adventitious ? Character is personal, and does not depend upon office, titles, or wealth ; and the Scripture lays so little stress on these things, that it never mentions them for their own sake, but only to remind us of their danger, to illustrate the grace of God in the preservation of those who are intrusted with them, or to display moral and spiritual endowments to advantage. For if persons possessed of genuine religion occupy a higher station, they are not only more tried than others, but more seen, more exemplary, more influential, and have more opportunities and means of usefulness. While others, by the obscurity of their condition, are like a candle placed under a bushel, they are like “a candle set on a candlestick, which giveth light to all that are in the house.” They are “a city set on a hill which cannot be hid.”

“Not many mighty, not many noble are called.”

But in all ages there have been some who have brought all their distinctions to the foot of the Cross, willing to part with all to purchase the pearl of great price. These have been so few, as to make it obvious that the cause of religion has not been indebted for its support to worldly greatness, but to the power of God; while they have been sufficiently numerous to remove the reproach of those who would conclude that the Gospel is only suited to the vulgar and illiterate, and to keep from absolute despair those who find themselves awfully situated among the perils of eminence. "With God all things are possible."

This Shunamite, therefore, will be found no less remarkable for her goodness than for her greatness. The place of her residence was Shunem, a town in the tribe of Issachar, in the road between Samaria and Carmel. This road Elisha often travelled, and one day as he was going by, she gave him an invitation to her house. It does not appear that at this time she had any particular knowledge of him. It was therefore an act of hospitality rather than of friendship. But friendship was soon the result of kindness; and we may observe that some of the most remarkable friendships that have ever been formed, have been formed incidentally. They have not grown out of any previous design, but have risen from casual intercourse, from some agreeable word, some seasonable attention, or the performance of some obliging office.

Indeed, while we are doing good to others, we are always in the way of finding good for ourselves; and the event before us brings to our recollection the words of the Apostle to the Hebrews, "Be not for-

getful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." This was the case with Abraham, this was the case with Lot, and this was nearly the case with the Shunamite. While they accommodated some of the Heavenly Host, she welcomes a Prophet of the most High God. We cannot suppose that this will ever be our case, but it will be well for us to find at the Day of Judgment, that by the exereise of benevolence and liberality towards the poor, and destitute, and helpless, we have entertained not a prophet, nor an angel, but the Lord of all ; and to hear him say, "I was a stranger and ye took me in—inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

Why was Elisha so backward to comply with this generous invitation ? Did he feel the embarrassment which has often appeared so formidable to men of retired habits at their introduction to company ? Was he unambitious of mixing with those above him in rank ? Was he ignorant of the character of this great and good woman ? Was he unwilling to give trouble ? Would he ascertain his weleome by importunity ? However this may be, importunity was necessary. "Sheeonstrained him."

Elisha was so satisfied and delighted with the reception he met with, that from this time "as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread." But if she has gained his confidencee, he has gained her veneration and esteem ; and, struck with her obseruation of the simplicity of his manners, the sanctity of his life, the frequeney and fervency of his devotions, she said unto her husband, "Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God, which passeth by us

continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall ; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick ; and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither." There are two things in this design that are worthy of our remark. The one is, that she would not undertake this business without the knowledge and consent of her husband. Nothing can atone for the want of confidence in the marriage state. By the very nature of their union, the parties have given up themselves to each other, and are no longer their own. They therefore should feel not only a communion, but a community of joys and sorrows, and maintain a unity of views and interests. Nothing is more likely to subtract from domestic happiness, than the discovery or apprehension of carrying on any separate design. How shameful is the conduct of some husbands. They gamble, they speculate in business, they entangle themselves in the affairs of this life, and pull down ruin upon their families, while their suffering wives (though perhaps reflected upon as in some measure the cause) know nothing till they feel the crash, and their hearts are desolate within them.

You, therefore, my female friends, may see that I am far from wishing to consider this duty *partially*. But surely the obligation is mutual. Some would contend that it bears more strongly on you, owing to the order which Providence has established, and which the Scripture sanctions. But surely you will acknowledge that you are *equally* bound to observe it. Remember, therefore, that by claim you ought to obtain everything that is reasonable ; and by amiableness, by address,

by frankness, you may gain everything that is desirable ; but flee artifice and concealment ; they are always exceptionable, the instruments of low, of little, of ignoble minds.

The other is the manner in which her generosity is exercised. It has been said that in all great exigencies male friendship is preferable ; but where comfort is concerned, and where as much depends on the mode of administration as on the thing itself, a female friend is above all things estimable. Not only is her benevolence more watchful, and prompt, and active, but more feeling and delicate. We have frequently the substance of friendship without the ornament—we wound while we serve. Our hearts, like our fingers, are less tender, and we press the sore while we bind it up. We seldom know how to give importance to circumstances which have none in themselves.

But how much of this do we discern in this Shunamite ? She discovers a sensibility that is never absent. It forgets nothing ; omits nothing. With the extemporaneousness of sentiment, and the judiciousness of plan, she decides the whole case. She considers the office, the character, the dispositions and habits of the person she wishes to favor, and shows her respect in her kindness. No one circumstance of propriety and decency is overlooked. She considers that to a man of his turn of mind, retirement will be welcome. She determines, therefore, that his meditations shall not be disturbed and interrupted by the tumult of a family, and orders for him a separate apartment in the external part of the house. She reflects that it is a delicate thing to relieve a person so respectable, and that in bestowing a benefit, the receiver

should not be made to feel unpleasantly his obligation. She resolves, therefore, that he shall enjoy the pleasure, so natural to man, of having something that he can call his own, and which he may use at pleasure, and not be reminded of his dependence by each fresh invitation. She considers that a man of God will not look after finery and excess. Nothing, therefore, splendid or extravagant shall be furnished, but everything that is needful for accommodation, repose, or use. "Let us set for him a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick."

And herein the Shunamite appears to more advantage than Martha, who entertained our Lord and his disciples. Martha was a good woman, and what she did flowed from the kindness of her heart; but she did not discern both time and judgment. "She was cumbered about much serving;" and to have a number of things, and in the nicest order, she was hurried, became impatient and fretful, and reproached her sister. Had she been providing for a company of newly-made gentry, luxurious merchants, or any of those "whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things," it would have been in character; it would have gratified *their* hopes and wishes; *they* would have been ready to canonize her; with them she would have been St. Martha; but all this was lost, more than lost, on one who "had not where to lay his head," whose "kingdom was not of this world," who was more disposed to feed than to be fed, "who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

The conduct of the Shunamite reminds us that there are better ways of showing our regard to min-

isters, than by entertainments unsuited to their circumstances and calling, and which, if they are in a proper state of mind, will give pain rather than pleasure. But while we would regulate, we would by no means wish to restrain the exercise of benevolence (if it be proper to call it *so*) towards those that watch for your souls. In our denominations, where they have no parochial support, ministers are generally in dependent circumstances, and why should they blush to own it? Expressions of kindness tend to keep alive affectionate regard; but these expressions are more than needful and useful; they are just, and that man of God degrades his office who looks upon them as charity or alms. It is easy to see that he has claims upon us. By devoting his time and his talents to our service, he effectually excludes himself from all those means of worldly aggrandizement that lie open to us, and which often enable us by inferior abilities to rise in life. We are commanded "to know them who labor among us, and are over us in the Lord, and admonish us, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." "Let him," says the Apostle, "that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." "For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that plougheth should plough in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

And who was ever a loser by anything he did for the cause of God? "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward; and whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in nowise lose his reward." By making the Ark his guest, was Obed-edom a loser? "It was told King David saying, The Lord hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the Ark of God."

Was the Shunamite a loser?

Behold Elisha in his new little dwelling. A pious mind is always a grateful one, and gratitude consists in a disposition to return a favor received. He therefore sends his servant with a message of thanks, and a proposal of recompense. "Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? Wouldst thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host?" But how comes Elisha to be a favorite at court? And whence is it that he is able to introduce a petition with a probability of success, and to gain an honor or an office for a friend? It was probably owing to the late miracle which he had wrought for Jehoram and his two royal allies, in furnishing them with water, and enabling the confederate army to gain a complete victory over the Moabites. However this may be, we behold here, what often takes place in life, wickedness connected with something like moral principle; a regard for the godly, without any fear of God; men

so generous as to give up anything but their sins; willing to relieve "the fatherless and widows in their affliction," but refusing to "keep themselves unspotted from the world." Thus we see Jehoram, an idolater, yet honoring the man of God; resisting any attempt to procure a pious reformation, but ready to yield a political favor. In the Prophet we behold a most disinterested disposition. Far from making use of his influence to elevate himself, he employs it only to favor and gratify his friends. A good man will principally cultivate and value the intercourse he may have with the rich and great, as it may be the means of enabling him to do good by helping the wants of others.

But this good woman needs nothing from the higher powers. "I dwell among mine own people." "I am satisfied," as if she said, "with my present state. If it be destitute of some few things, it abounds with others much more essential to my welfare. I must fix limits somewhere to my hopes and wishes, and why not here? What probability is there that I should be happier by the change or the elevation? I am fixed; I am rooted; I am sheltered, and I would not hazard the risk of transplantation."

Here she appears in a new, but very instructive part of her character; and here, my female readers, we particularly wish to recommend her example to your imitation. We mean not to censure; but I believe you will readily acknowledge that it is not every one of your sex that would have resisted the force of such a fiery trial. You must allow that your imaginations are lively, your impressions from certain objects are rapid and strong, and your feelings, at the

sight of pomp and glitter, sometimes rather unmanageable. It has been commonly, I do not say righteously supposed, that you are a little more volatile and restless in your disposition than the other sex; more easily attracted by new forms of dress and new modes of living; and more alive to flattering distinctions. Hence, the mere prospect of rising has too frequently swallowed up every other consideration in the change of your situation, or of your condition. Hence, not a few of your sisters have sacrificed youth and beauty to disagreeable old age, tempted by finery and splendor—a carriage or a title. Hence, in the disposal of their children, they have been seduced by the glaring to neglect the useful. Hence, husbands have more than once been urged to leave a humble but profitable line of business, to attempt something more genteel and extensive, by which they have been reduced and impoverished. Hence, now and then at least, launchings out beyond the income, in house, and table, and furniture, and apparel; and dishonesty itself has appeared less disgraceful and intolerable than being out of the fashion.

I feel therefore disposed to enlarge a little on this part of my subject, and to submit not only to *your* attention, but the attention of all, a few remarks, suited, by the Divine blessing, to produce in your minds the sentiment of this sober and contented Shunamite. And, in the *first* place, let it be observed, that ambition has no bounds. You have now, perhaps, fixed your aim, and you imagine that if you could attain such a mark you should be satisfied, not recollecting that when this is secured new necessities and desires will arise, and that the passions will always

be increased, not reduced, by indulgence. "Hence," says the excellent Bishop Hopkins, "whatever be our condition, we still long for change, and can no more rest in a high state than in a low one. The servant thinks he shall be happy when he is made free. Is the freeman happy? No; but he will, as soon as he has gained such an estate. Is the rich man happy? No; but he will, as soon as he is invested with such a title. Is the honorable happy? No; but he will, as soon as he is supreme. Is the sovereign happy? No; but he will, as soon as he has tyrannized over all, and become universal monarch." Is Alexander happy? He weeps for more worlds to conquer. "It was, therefore," says the same writer, "a pertinent discourse which Cineas the philosopher held with Pyrrhus, when dissuading him from war with Rome. And, sir, when you have conquered the Romans, what will you do next? Then we will cross over and take Sicily. And what will you do then? Then we will pass over to Africa and take Carthage. And what will you do after this? Then we will fall upon Greece and Macedon, and recover what we have lost there. And what then? Then we will sit down and enjoy ourselves. And pray, sir, why cannot we do this now?" O! let us ask our hearts the same question whenever we are suspending our happiness upon the result of schemes and enterprises which will no more insure it than the circumstances in which we are now found.

Secondly. We know not how we should feel in new and untried conditions of life. We can only judge according to our *present* views, but these are only suited to our *present* state. Different sentiments

will arise out of different circumstances, and it is impossible for us to assume the feelings before we realize the events. Situations to which we are not adapted by previous use, are likely to confound and embarrass us, rather than to afford us comfort or pleasure; and habits are not easily formed or easily resigned. But the moral danger attending changes and elevations is still greater and more important; and we ought always to be principally concerned for our spiritual safety and welfare. Surely a Christian will ask, is such a state more likely to wean me from the world, or advance the life of God in my soul? Is it more likely to cherish devotion, or to chill my heavenly affections? And does not Hazael teach us that, in humbler life, we may sincerely execrate vices which success and prosperity may harden us to commit? Have we not seen persons who were so promising, that we would have depended upon them if placed in any state of trial, whose table has proved a snare, and whose prosperity has destroyed them; so that, in the worst sense of the word, they have become new creatures, and seem, as they rose, not only to have left their virtue, but even themselves behind? And when so many have fallen—and we cannot be sure that we should stand—how is it that we are so anxious to be set in slippery places?

Thirdly. If happiness depends at all on worldly circumstances, it is to be found in a mediocrity equally distant from indigence and superfluity—below envy and above contempt—and neither excluding solitude or society. A bed is desirable, but who sleeps the sounder for having the posts gilt? One staff in a journey is useful, but a large bundle of staves would

only encumber the traveller. The garment that hangs off loose, and that which presses too tightly, are both unpleasant ; the thing is, to have something that will fit. So it is here ; and hence the wise as well as the good have always prayed with Agur—" Give me neither poverty nor riches ; feed me with food convenient for me ; lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord ; or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

But *fourthly*, The truth is, that happiness does not depend upon external things, but upon the principles and dispositions of the mind ; and therefore, that it is as accessible to us in our present state, as in any imaginable one. Observe those who have risen in life. Have they advanced in contentment as they have increased in wealth or honor ? They have gained by the ascent more awful responsibility, more arduous duty, more anxious care, more exposure to temptation. But what have they gained in solid satisfaction, in tranquillity, in liberty ? Ah ! how often have they returned to the edge of the hill, and, even with regrets, surveyed the vale below, where once they walked with God, and passed their days in innocence and repose ! What is the confession of Solomon, after a thousand trials ?—" All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

God never designed that any of these things should satisfy us. In vain, therefore, we seek the living among the dead. In every such pursuit we only resemble children ascending hill after hill to catch the sky, which rests on none of them ; or a number of patients, who, by a change of posture, are seeking for the relief which can only come from an inward cure. We blame our portion for what is wrong in ourselves, and

forget that the ground of our discontent is not our wants, but our wishes. There is scarcely any condition so low but may satisfy our wants ; and there is none so high as to satisfy our desires. If we live according to the laws of nature and reason, we shall never be poor ; if we live according to those of fancy and opinion, we shall never be rich.

Cultivate, therefore, happiness within. Seek it not in a superior station, but in a contented mind. Endeavor to reduce your wishes, rather than to enlarge, your means. Guard against a roving mind. Be keepers and lovers of home. Make the most of present enjoyment, and of actual possession, in distinction from future and imaginary.

Enter that school in which the Apostle studied, and was enabled to say, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound : everywhere, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ, which strengthened me." Confide in the providence of your heavenly Father, as concerned in fixing the bounds of your habitation, and as engaged to make all things work together for your good. Leave him to choose your inheritance for you, and then, in the end, you will be able to acknowledge, "The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places ; yea, I have a goodly heritage."

You would do well, also, to remember that this is not your rest ; that you are only strangers and pilgrims upon earth ; and that, in a very little time, it will be a matter of indifference to you whether you have been poor or rich, splendid or obscure.

Seek after a well-grounded hope of heaven. This will

reconcile you to any privations you may be called to bear upon earth; and, should you even walk in the midst of trouble, this will revive you, and you will be enabled to say, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed." "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

LECTURE II.

THE SHUNAMITE.

PART II.

And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunamite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son. Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.—2 KINGS, iv. 36, 37.

FEW will deny the utility of illustrating principles and dispositions by examples; and the importance of presenting vices and virtues, not abstracted in their definitions, but embodied in action, and enlivened in character. Hence so large a proportion of the Word of God is occupied with the account of particular persons. We have never, indeed, the whole life given us; but a few bold sketches are exhibited which discriminate the individual, and interest and instruct the observer.

In this number, no one appears to more advantage than the Shunamite, on whose history we have already entered. Our last lecture left her declining the offer of advancement which had been made her. It was a trial which very few could have borne; but she nobly answered, “I dwell among mine own people.”

“It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes;” and the influence which Elisha

is forbidden to use with the king on her behalf, he is resolved to employ in another direction. He consults with his servant what is to be done for her. Gehazi reminds him that she is childless, and her husband old ; and that as there was no heir to whom the matrimonial estate would descend, the family would be soon extinct in Israel ; and, therefore, if he could obtain from God the favor of a son, he would effectually remove her grievance, and gratify her in the most acceptable manner. Who can help observing here the imperfection attached to our present state ? On how many things does our happiness depend, the absence of any one of which destroys or impairs the wholé ? And who can say, every wish of my heart is accomplished ; I now want nothing ? Alas ! something is always wanting in the quality or the degree. To-day we complain of chilling cold, to-morrow the sun beats upon our head, and we are ready to faint. Alone we sigh for company, in company we long for solitude. Here is a large family with scanty means of subsistence, there every kind of abundance is attended with the lack of offspring ; and thus human happiness and misery are more equally dispensed than we are prone to imagine. Endowments and deficiencies are wisely balanced. All have something—none have all.

“ Lo ! children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is His reward ; ” and of nothing were women of old so anxious, as the enjoyment of offspring. This eagerness has been frequently accounted for on the supposition, that they hoped to be the mother of the Messiah. This was indeed a very enviable distinction, and when we reflect upon

our Saviour's glory, we cannot help exclaiming with the woman of the company, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked!" But the probability of the possession of this honor would not, at least *generally*, actuate the Jewish women, especially after the more particular revelation of the Messiah's descent; for after it was known that He was to spring from the tribe of Judah, and the family of David, no female of any other tribe or family could reasonably expect it. The cause is to be sought for in human nature—in the force of opinion—in the desire of respectability—in the feeling of importance—in the concern to please—in the appointment of heaven.

In the case of the Shunamite the boon would be rendered peculiarly welcome, because it had been so long denied, and now came unlooked for; therefore when it was announced, she knew not how to credit the report—"Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid." It has been said, that it is easy to believe what we wish, but common feeling contradicts this assertion. On the contrary, it is well known that the more we prize a thing, and the more eager we are to obtain it, the more alive are we to uncertainty, suspicion, and fear; and the more we crave every kind and degree of assurance. And this will be found to apply in another case, and with regard to a greater blessing than the promise of a child. They are the careless that presume; they are the unawakened and unconvinced who never question their state. But the man that hungers and thirsts after righteousness, and is asking, What must I do to be saved? he will find how hard it is to hope, and will never think

that he can have too much evidence to assure his heart before God—and that solicitude to know that he is safe, and that diffidence of himself which leads to so much self-examination, (though considered by some as a kind of unbelief,) are really the effect of genuine faith. Smoke is not fire, but there is no smoke where there is no fire. Doubting, therefore, is generally a good prognostic. It shows that a man is impressed with the importance of his condition, and is unable to neglect it.

But the Shunamite need not fear. She has the word of a prophet—a prophet of the God of truth, with whom all things are possible. The event soon confirms and fulfils the prediction—“And the woman conceived and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life.” And thus, she who built a chamber for the man of God, has the prospect of her house being built up in Israel; and she who had distinguished herself by her generosity and friendship, is rewarded by the gift of a life the most precious.

Who does not congratulate her for joy that a man is born into the world! Behold her now nursing her charge, and attending the child of promise and of prayer! With what pleasure she marks the progress of his body and of his mind, as he grows in wisdom and in stature! With what pleasure she sees him beginning to walk alone! With what pleasure she listens to the first lisping of his tongue, and keeps all his sayings, and ponders them in her heart! Nothing, perhaps, in this world is more delightful than the growth of a fine healthy infant.

But how precarious is every earthly possession!

Have we riches? they make to themselves wings and flee away. Have we honor? it hangs on the wavering tongue of the multitude, and shakes before every blast of disrespect. Have we health, the balm of life? our strength is not the strength of stones, nor are our bones brass; we are crushed before the moth—we are destroyed from morning to evening. Have we children? O let us hold them with a loose hand! What certain cares! what uncertain comforts are they! One half of their number dies in a state of infancy. How many seeds of disorder are sown in their tender frames, which a few unfriendly influences render malignant—while they are exposed to so many accidents and dangers from without, that we should despair of ever seeing a child reach maturity, did not our Saviour inform us, their angels do always make them their charge.

It was now harvest—the father was early abroad with the reapers—the child seeks him out—the father sees him running towards him through the gate, and feels himself young again while he is entertained with his innocent prattle. But whether it was that the beams of the sun were too strong, or some internal complaint began to operate, we know not; but the dear child is seized with pain, and “cries unto his father, My head, my head.” What nature urges this child to do, grace should teach us to do. In all our troubles we should immediately go and divulge them to our Heavenly Father, who is always nigh, always accessible; who pities us more than a father pities his children; and who not only allows us, but commands us in everything by prayer and supplication, to make known our requests unto God.

“Carry him,” says the father, “carry him to his

mother." Was this expressive of indifference? Does it mean, that he was so engrossed with his farm and his grain, that he comparatively disregards his child? Were we to judge from the character of too many husbandmen at such a busy season, we should be led perhaps to this conclusion; for such men have not always been very remarkable for sensibility. But no. It is obvious that he was not aware of anything more than a slight temporary indisposition. But he deems it a proper precaution to send him home. His mother would be the best judge of his complaint, and with her he would want no attention. What a refuge, what a solace are a mother's arms and a mother's bosom! O! the importance of a mother! "As one whom his mother comforteth." My dear little children, be thankful if your mothers are spared to you by a kind Providence; and oh, pity those bereaved children who have no mother. *Their* mother lies in the cold church-yard; in vain they repair to the place, and use a name which, if anything was able, would awake her in the grave—"my mother;" but their cries, if oppressed, cannot reach her ears; nor, if well-treated, can the news gladden her heart. Some of these are only committed to the care of hirelings; in other cases, substitutes are provided to supply the place of the maternal relation. But this is impossible. A wife may be replaced; a mother cannot. Let a successor be ever so amiable, ever so gentle, ever so attentive, (and there are such who cannot be too highly praised,) yet they never bore them, never brought one forth, never nursed them at their own breast—do not, cannot feel the ties which bind a mother to the son of her womb.

I see the lad hanging on the neck of the man who bears him home—and O! when they enter the yard, how would all the mother rise up and feel! She instantly takes him—"and he sat on her knees till noon, and then died." Well in the morning, a corpse long before evening! No care, no tenderness, no tears, can retain his spirit. O! what were the workings of her heart during the hours of suspense? What were her feelings when she saw the lip quiver, and felt his life poured into her bosom?

It is easy to imagine into what an agony, frenzy, perturbation, and confusion many a mother would have been thrown. But here we have another fine opening into the character of this illustrious female. It is her self-possession. Self-possession is that state of mind in which, though a person cannot hinder his feelings, he can govern them; and though he may be alarmed and distressed, yet he preserves his recollection; and can use his feet, hands, eyes, ears, his reason, and if he has any, his religion. Behold the temper and the demeanor of this woman. Here is nothing frantic, no rending of garments, no plucking off the hair, no peevish murmuring, no sullen discontent. "Weeping does not hinder sowing." She perceives everything that should be done, and lo! she is at once applying herself to the doing of it. The affliction must have been the greatest she could have endured, and the affliction was also very sudden, and nothing so overpowers and distracts as the suddenness of a calamity. But nothing prevents the exercise of her wisdom and her grace.

What was the principle of her conduct? We learn, from the authority of God himself, in the Epistle to

the Hebrews, that it was "faith." She was a daughter of Abraham, and, like him, in hope, believed against hope ; accounting that God was able even to raise her son also from the dead. This influenced her, and this explains the steps she took. She lays the child, not on his own little couch, but upon the Prophet's bed ; and she fastens the door after her, discovering no consternation that could betray or hinder her design. She sends to her husband for conveyance and attendance to go to the man of God ; but though she acquaints him with her journey, she does not mention the cause of it. "And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him to-day ? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath. And she said, it shall be well." From hence we see—*1st*, That this good woman had been accustomed, with others, to repair to the usual residence of Elisha, to hear, doubtless, the Word of God from his mouth, and to join in the devotions of prayer and of praise ; and, *2dly*, It appears that the father at this time had no suspicion of the child's death, but acquiesces in the assurance she had given him of the *propriety* of the measure she was taking, for his heart safely trusted in her.

Elisha discerns her afar off, and in a moment all the concerns of her family rushed into his tender and grateful heart, and he sends his servant to meet her with the inquiry, "Is it well with thee ? Is it well with thy husband ? Is it well with thy child ? And she answered, It is well." What does she mean ? Her answer may be considered three ways. It was the language of *diversion* ; wishing to waive any further inquiry of the servant till she reached the master. It was the language of *confidence* ; hopeful, if not per-

suaded of the issue in her favor. It was also the language of *submission*; conscious that all that had taken place, as well as what she hoped would take place, was wise, righteous, and kind; and that all was working together for good.

In this view, indeed, it was something more than submission; it was acquiescence; it was approbation. And this is the exalted kind of resignation which a believer in God should seek after. It should not be enough for him to say, "This is my grief, and I must bear it;" but "Good is the word of the Lord;"—"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."—"He hath done all things well."

Even this kind of resignation, however, is very distinguishable from stupidity and indifference. It does not consist in the absence of feeling, but in the regulation of it—in the improvement of it. It is by no means incompatible with a sense of the pressing evils of our situation, or a desire of redress. We see this in our Saviour himself in the garden, who prayed, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done."

Thus the Shunamite "fell down and caught him by the feet;" and a flood of tears seems to have been all her language for the time; and when the officious, unfeeling Gehazi came near to thrust her away, the more merciful master said, "Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the Lord hath hid it from me, and hath not told me."

The supernatural powers possessed by the Prophets and Apostles of old were not at their own control. The exercise of them was limited by the giver

Hence Paul, who wrought so many miracles in his journey, was obliged to leave Trophimus at Melita sick: he could not cure his beloved son Timothy, but only advises him what regimen to use under his frequent infirmities. Elisha had done many wonderful works, but he could not do everything. He could foretell the birth of this child, even before his conception, but he knew nothing of his sickness and death, even after the event. God revealed himself as he pleased; and this sorrowful intelligence he had withholden, in order that he might learn it from the mother herself. And how does she divulge it? Never was anything so exquisitely simple and expressive. Few words—no introduction—it is the heart that speaks. “Then she said, Did I desire a son of my Lord? Did I not say, Do not deceive me?” And if she had said, “Had I obtained a child by importunity, I might have feared that he gave me a son in his anger, and took him away in his wrath—for what we extort from God never prospers—but it was a free-will offering. Why was I anguished to bring him into the world? What end has his existence answered? Was a child granted me to bring forth, and not to rear? O how much easier it was to endure the want of this blessing than to bear the loss of it! O thou man of God, thy prayers obtained him, cannot thy prayers restore him?”

It is easy to conclude that, in all her affliction, Elisha would be afflicted. But in applying a remedy to her grief, he does a thing which has exceedingly perplexed commentators. He sends Gehazi with speed “to lay his staff upon the face of the child.” It may be asked, why he did this; and whence the inefficacy of the action? Was it done of his own conceit, without a

divine impulse? It is the opinion of some—Would not God honor by his countenance and sanction such a vile character as Gehazi? It is the conjecture of others—Or was it because the faith of this woman did not go along with it? This seems most probable. Our Lord always required faith in the suppliants who applied to him, and no cure was dispensed without it. And this woman had faith in the master, but not in the servant; in the prayers of the Prophet, but not in his staff. She therefore cleaves to Elisha, and affirms that she will not leave HIM. He therefore arose and followed her. “And when he was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. He went in, therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord. And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times; and the child opened his eyes.” And here we have reached a scene in which we must all take a sympathetic and lively part:—The mother called in to receive her son, endeared by the pangs and the joys of a second birth! With what emotions of transport would she “take up her son” that “was dead, and is alive again—was lost, and is found.”

But even here the character of this illustrious woman appears. As when in her grief she was not swallowed up of overmuch sorrow, so as to forget the duties of adversity; so in her deliverance she is not

intoxicated with delight. She doubtless felt a joy that strangers intermeddle not with, and which no one who is not in the same circumstances can estimate ; but it does not betray her for one moment into a violation of any of the duties or decencies of prosperity. A mother in such a condition as this might surely be expeeted to rush towards the bed, and take up the child *first*, and press him to her bosom, and see, hear, think of nothing else. And who would not have excused her ? But the Shunamite has nothing to excuse. She stands on higher ground. She is in everything exemplary. Propriety, dignity attends all her actions, not to ward off censure, but to command praise. Not even the feelings of a mother—of a mother placed in circumstances so affecting—shall cause her to neglect the prior claims of humble and fervent adoration and gratitude. “Then she went in, and *fell at his feet*, and bowed herself to the ground, *and took up her son, and went out.*”—“Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.”

A fanciful turn has been given to the whole of this marvellous transaction. It has been supposed that this miracle forms an outline of what is clearly taught us in the book of God, concerning the renovation of mankind ; and we have seen a published sermon on the subject, by a man of some judgment, as well as much imagination. According to him this woman holds forth the church,—often compared to a female, and a mother—and concerned for the spiritual life of her children. The dead child typifies those of the people of God who are yet dead in trespasses and sins, and “have neither voice nor hearing.”

Elisha stands forth a striking emblem of him who is the resurrection and the life, and who in the days of his flesh said, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." In vain is the servant sent, and in vain is the staff imposed; nothing is done till the master himself comes, and applies his power to the work. Thus ministers of our Lord go forth and dispense the word of truth; but there is no revival, till he, by his own Spirit, breathes upon these dry bones, that they may live. The renewed life is produced by degrees, and requires, as here, fresh applications of divine energy. But as this child, as soon as he was restored to life, was given in charge to the mother, so the enlivened heir of glory is committed to the church, there to be fed and nourished "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

We shall not take upon us to determine whether the miracle was designed to furnish such a prefiguration. If the narrative be fairly capable of such an accommodation, I know not that it is wrong to make it. If such an application promises usefulness, we would not hinder it by rigid criticism. If imagination succeeds in impressing such interesting truths on the mind, let her alone, she has wrought a good work. Yet we should be cautious, lest we cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of; or by turning facts into fiction, and fiction into facts, spiritualize the Scripture, till it seems to have no determinate and certain meaning.

Let us conclude by an inference, which is not only useful, but which the history was designed to afford.

Behold the power of prayer. It has commanded the heavenly bodies ; it has controlled the elements ; it has raised the dead.

Behold the power of faith. "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." "Whosoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." And what says the Apostle of the ancient worthies, and of faith ? "The time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephæ ; of David also, and Samuel, and of the Prophets : who through' faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword ; out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. WOMEN RECEIVED THEIR DEAD RAISED TO LIFE AGAIN."

Above all, behold the power of God, who wounds and who heals, who kills and who makes alive !

We are not to expect miracles, but we are not to limit the Holy One of Israel. Improbabilities are not to discourage us. In all our difficulties, we have one to trust in "who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." We have one to trust in for whom nothing is too hard ; in whom the exiled can find refuge, the poor riches, the weak strength, the dying life, and the dead life everlasting.

We are not to expect a repetition of this miracle in this world. But there is another world, in which we shall see greater things than these. And "why

should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?" He has not only given us promises of it, but furnishes us with actual and undeniable instances.

Let us apply this consolatory truth to our own death and the death of others. Have any of you been called to bury the desire of your eyes? Religion does not forbid your grief; it does not expect that you should put your fingers upon their eyes, and lay them, after years of intimacy, in the darksome grave, and leave them there, and return home without a sigh or without a tear. But it says, "we would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them who are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Martha, "thy brother shall rise again. Believest thou this?" Have any of you buried promising hopes? Rachel, are you weeping for your children? Are you saying, "happy Shunamite! your loss was soon repaired, but my wound is incurable; I shall never embrace my son. Alas, no Elisha is near?" Refuse not to be comforted because they are not. They ARE. Their souls are in the bosom of their heavenly Shepherd. Their bodies are under his keeping; you *shall* see them again, hear them again; they *will* be delivered back, dressed in immortal charms. "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."

But you must die yourselves, and death is the

King of Terrors. It has often filled even the Christian with dread. But trembling on the brink of the grave, he takes courage while his God addresses him, and says, "Be not afraid to go down, I will go down with thee, and I will bring thee up again."—"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth ; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God ; whom I shall see for myself; and mine eyes shall behold, and not another ; though my reins be consumed within me."

Let us seek after an interest in the blessedness of those "who have part in the first resurrection ;" for "on such the second death hath no power." Let us live with "our conversation in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

LECTURE III.

THE SHUNAMITE.

PART III.

And it came to pass as he was telling the King how he had restored a dead body to life, that, behold the woman, whose son he had restored to life, cried to the King for her house, and for her land. And Gehazi said, My lord, O King, this is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life.—*2 KINGS*, viii. 5.

THE Providence of God was held forth to Ezekiel in vision, under the representation of a wheel. The motion of a wheel is revolutionary ; the parts are continually ascending and descending, and the highest and the lowest alternately succeed each other in the mire and in the air. And thus it is with empires, thus it is with families, and thus it is with individuals. All human affairs are administered in a state of perpetual vicissitude. From small beginnings the poor grow into wealth, while the rich are hurled from affluence into beggary, and have their present distress embittered by the remembrance of the former plenty that surrounded them. The ignoble emerge into fame, while the honorable of the earth are stripped of their dignity—

Here, he exalts neglected worms,
To sceptres and a crown;
Anon, the following page he turns,
And treads the monarch down.

Not Gabriel asks the reason why,
Nor God the reason gives,
Nor dares the favorite angel pry,
Between the folded leaves.

But, though “clouds and darkness are round about him, justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne; mercy and truth go before his face.” Though these changes may seem casual, they are divinely appointed. Though they may appear uneven and irregular, they are all order and harmony. Though they may be misunderstood and misimproved, important ends are to be answered by them all, in the correction of the wicked, in the trial of the godly, in the glory of Him that worketh all in all.

Happy will it be for us if we have principles and dispositions that will enable us to accommodate ourselves to all the varying dispensations of Divine Providence, and to say with the Apostle, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.”

We left the Shunamite at a very interesting period. She had just received her dead child raised to life again, and was feeling that lively joy which arises more from the recovery than the continued possession of a valued blessing. But we must always rejoice with trembling. The mountain never stands so

strong but it may be moved; the sky which serenity has cleared may again be overcast, and the clouds return after the rain. We are never out of the reach of disappointment in this vale of tears. We are vulnerable in our persons, in our connections, in our possessions. Innumerable troubles of a private or of a public nature, which no prudence could foresee, no diligence ward off, may frustrate our schemes, separate us from our friends, drive us from the bounds of our habitation, and compel us to go out, not knowing whither we go. “I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.”

After a few years of domestic tranquillity and enjoyment, the Shunamite is constrained to leave not only her own dwelling, but even her native country. Here we have an opportunity to drop a few words concerning removals in general. We are not absolutely confined to one spot. “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof;” and, as they laughed at *his* folly, in Terence, who said there was a much better moon at Athens than there was at Corinth, so it would be absurd to suppose that there is a better God in one place than in another.

Where'er we seek him, he is found,
And every place is hallowed ground.

While place we seek, or placee we shun,
The soul finds happiness in none;
But with a God, whose grace I know,
'Tis equal joy to stay or go.

Could I but cast where thou art not,
That were indeed a dreadful lot;

But regions none forlorn I call,
Secure of finding Thee in all.

Yet removals should always be undertaken, not from fickleness and levity, but from proper and weighty reasons. Some men are never fixed, but always roving hither and thither; and exemplify the proverb—"A rolling stone gathers no moss." A tree often transplanted seldom radicates well, and its fruit is weak and sickly. It was the advice of a heathen, "Where thou art well, keep thyself well, lest thinking to meet with better, thou findest worse." Many difficulties should surely be borne, before people think of emigrating from their own country. The risk is commonly great, both as to profit and pleasure. The representations of travellers are not always to be depended upon. How many of those who have left England ("England! with all thy faults, I love thee still"), and have gone abroad, have ruined themselves, and mourned their inability to return. With few exceptions, where Providence has brought us forth, and brought us up, we should be willing to abide, especially remembering who has said—"Trust in the Lord, and do good, and dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."

But necessity has no law. It was famine that drove the Shunamite from her own country. "Then spake Elisha unto the woman whose son he had restored to life, saying, Arise, and go, thou and thine household, and sojourn wheresoever thou canst sojourn; for the Lord hath called for a famine; and it shall also come upon the land seven years." This is one of the most dreadful arrows in God's quiver. Happily for us who live in a land which the Lord hath cared for, we are incapable of knowing the horrors of it from experience.

But, ah! think what it would be if the heaven over you was brass, and the earth under you was iron—if a prophet like Joel should come and say, “That which the palmer-worm hath left hath the locust eaten ; and that which the locust hath left hath the canker-worm eaten ; and that which the canker worm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten. The meat-offering and the drink-offering is cut off from the house of the Lord ; the priests, the Lord’s ministers, mourn. The field is wasted, the land mourneth ; for the corn is wasted, the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth. Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen ; howl, O ye vine-dressers, for the wheat and for the barley, because the harvest of the field is perished. The vine is dried up, and the fig-tree languisheth ; the pomegranate tree, the palm-tree also, and the apple-tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered ; because joy is withered away from the sons of men. The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down for the corn is withered. How do the beasts groan ! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture ; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate.” Think what it would be to feed on roots and garbage, and animals the most offensive, and even human flesh, as delicious viands. It was this that gave rise to the pitiful lamentation, “They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger ; for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field. The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children ; they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people.”

But observe how long this famine was to continue :

no less than seven years! and secondly, see how it came; "The Lord hath called for a famine," says Elisha. David has expressed himself in similar language—"Moreover, he called for a famine upon the land; he brake the whole staff of bread." It is to intimate what is clearly affirmed in other parts of Scripture, that God is to be acknowledged in judgments as well as in mercies; and that, whatever may be the *second* cause, he is always the *first*. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" "The inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good; but evil came down from the Lord unto the gate of Jerusalem." Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy." "Out of him came forth the arrow, out of him the nail, out of him the battle-bow, out of him every oppressor together."

It also shows us with what ease he can punish or destroy. He has but to speak and the judgment obeys his call. He has evils of every kind and of every degree awaiting his pleasure. He says to one come, and it cometh; to another go, and it goeth. Their direction is unerringly prescribed;—their objects are specified; their continuance is limited; all they are commissioned to perform they *must* execute. "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven; and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto Him, what doest thou?" One word from God would bring disease, and stop the progress of the most victorious army; one word from God would raise the stormy wind, and sink a navy like lead in the mighty

waters. O that we may feel our entire dependence upon God, and acknowledge *Him* in all our ways; whose eye is upon us, and we are not!

But look at this woman, and learn that it is as easy for God to save as to destroy. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation;" while "he reserves the ungodly unto the day of judgment to be punished." Sometimes, indeed, his own people are involved in common calamities: he then indemnifies them in some other way; and though they suffer *with* others, they do not suffer *like* them. But he has often interposed for their exemption, and sometimes he has appeared for them so sensibly as to constrain their enemies to acknowledge, that "verily there is a reward for the righteous, verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth." Thus, Noah was saved and the world drowned. Thus, Lot was rescued from the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. Thus, in all the plagues inflicted by Moses, God put a difference between the Egyptians and the Israelites. And thus, in the dreadful calamity that was coming upon Judea, and from which so many must have suffered and died, the Shunamite has a way made for her escape; God informing the Prophet and the Prophet informing her: "Arise, and go thou and thine household, and sojourn wheresoever thou canst sojourn; for the Lord hath called for a famine; and it shall also come upon the land seven years."

This was a trial of her faith. It is probable that at this season' there was no natural appearance of such a dearth; and had the man of God addressed this to many, he would have seemed to them as one that mocked; and they would have said, "Well, we'll

wait and try ; we shall do as well as others.” But the Shunamite believed his word ; and, as faith can only be proved by works, she immediately acts according to his suggestion ; and taking a long farewell of home, she goes forth—

“ All the world before her, where to chose
Her place of rest, and Providence her guide.”

The famine was not universal ; it did not rage in the neighboring country of the Philistines. Thither therefore she bends her steps, with her husband and her only child (who would ask many an artless question by the way) ; and looking to God for protection, she enters a land generally hostile to Israel, but she finds favor in their eyes.

Though nothing is said of her while in this state of exile, we may be assured that her conduct was in character with her circumstances and her profession ; that the same principles which had enabled her to appear to advantage in every former trying scene, would qualify her to act properly in this new exigency ; that she would not faint in the day of adversity, but submit herself under the mighty hand of God, who could exalt her in due time ; that though accustomed to ease and indulgence before, she would stoop to labor, and frugality, and self-denial ; that as in such a situation the eyes of many would be upon her, who would judge of her religion by her, she would be careful to give no offence, that the name of God should not be blasphemed among the Gentiles by her means ; yea, to be useful, to recommend amiably her godliness to others, dropping occasional instruction, and walking in wisdom towards them that were

without. This is what the Apostle enjoins upon all Christians—"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world ; holding forth the word of life ; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain." And who knows of what utility, during her residence among the Philistines, this woman was the instrument ?

But the seven years are at length elapsed, and she thinks of returning home. She would doubtless return with feelings very different from those with which she went forward. But alas ! we are oftener deceived on the side of our hopes than of our fears. She finds better entertainment among strangers and foreigners than among her own countrymen.

Either some persons had seized the estate by violence, or probably those entrusted with the management in her absence, had proved false, and would neither resign, nor come to any settlement. If the latter supposition be true, it shows us what little principle there is in the world, and reminds us of Solomon's words : "Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint."

However this may be, it furnishes us with another proof of the precariousness of treasure upon earth, where not only "moth and rust doth corrupt, but where thieves break through and steal." Well are the rich called upon, not to "trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy ;" and "that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to com-

municate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come." For we know "not what evil shall be upon the earth." It is well, therefore, to have something certain to look to in distress, and this may be secured by benevolence and liberality ; for "blessed is he that considers the poor, the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble." "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord ; and that which he hath given will he pay him again." Nothing is like making Providence our banker. Nothing is like our securing his blessing and friendship, who has all hearts in his hands, and all events under his control. While the Shunamite had property, she did good with it, and she had no reason to repent. She was well paid for her accommodation of the Prophet, in the gift and resurrection of her son, in keeping herself and her family alive in famine, and in the recovery of her estate.

This is the event that concludes her history, and it is a very instructive one. "She went forth to cry unto the King for her house and for her land"—and behold the marvellousness of the occurrence. "The King was talking with Gehazi of all the great things which Elisha had done," at the very time the woman approached with her suit, yea, at the very time when she herself happened to be the subject of conversation. "And it came to pass, as he was telling the King how he had restored a dead body to life, that behold, the woman, whose son he had restored to life, cried to the King for her house, and for her land. And Gehazi said, My Lord, O King, *this* is the woman, and *this* is her son whom Elisha restored to life."

Upon this consideration of circumstances depended the immediate recovery of her property and arrears. " And when the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed unto her a certain officer, saying, Restore all that was hers, and all the fruits of the field since the day that she left the land, even until now."

Everything in our world is providential. Our Saviour teaches us that nothing is beneath His notice, however minute. A sparrow falleth not to the ground without our Heavenly Father ; and the hairs of our head are all numbered. But besides the ordinary course of Providence, there are two classes of occurrences mentioned often in the Scripture. The one is *miraculous*, the other is what we call *eventful*. The former is contrary to the laws of nature, or above them ; the latter is not an immediate effect produced by an exertion of divine power, but a display of wisdom taking things as they are, and giving them a peculiar union and result. In a word, though it be not miraculous, it is marvellous, and shows much of the agency of God ; and this sort of occurrences concerns us more than the miraculous. For miracles have ceased, but God continues to rule over all ; and by his secret influence can so direct persons, circumstances, and events, as to make them easily work together for our good.

This being premised, observe how critical was this moment for the Shunamite. The king talking WITH Gehazi, and Gehazi talking OF her. Shall we call this chance, fortune, luckiness ? How much depended upon Joseph's elevation ; even the salvation of Egypt and of his father's house. This depended upon his interpretation of Pharaoh's dream. This depended

upon his imprisonment with the chief butler and baker. This depended upon his being a servant in Potiphar's house. But all depended upon his life; and how came he to be saved alive? His brethren hated him, and when he comes into the field they agree to murder him. But one little circumstance diverted them from their purpose—"And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead, with their camels bearing spicery, and balm, and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. And Judah said unto his brethren, what profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother, and our flesh. And his brethren were content. Then there passed by Midianites, merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver; and they brought Joseph into Egypt." Was their passing by at this moment, and in this part of the plain, *accidental?* Moses was doomed to perish by a cruel edict. Three months his mother hid the fair child; but "when she could no longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child; and behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, this is one of the Hebrews' children." What

brought her down at this juncture, and to this very spot? When we consider Moses as a historian, a lawgiver, a deliverer; and that all—his life, his greatness—all was suspended upon these circumstances, can we suppose that the circumstances were contingent? David's first fame was derived from his carrying victuals to his brethren in the army; and from his arrival, just at the time when the Philistines came forth and defied the armies of the living God, and they fled back from his approach. Saul pursued after him in the wilderness of Maon; "And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain; and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about, to take them. But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land. Wherefore, Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines; therefore they called that place Sela-hamma-lekoth." Upon what hangs Mordcaï's elevation? Upon an hour's restlessness. "On that night could not the king sleep; and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles, and they were read before the king." Forty men had banded together, and bound themselves under a curse that they should not eat or drink till they had killed Paul. He was delivered, not by miracle, but by the report of his sister's son, who had casually heard the scheme of the assassins.

And who, in the course of a few years, has not met with some remarkable incidents of this nature? Though it is not necessary to publish them, yet we should do well to remember them, for the purposes

of gratitude and encouragement. “He that will observe Providences will never want Providences to observe,” says an old divine; and says David, “Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.” Elijah’s receiving his food by ravens was miraculous, and so was the multiplication of the widow’s oil; but is not the hand of God to be seen in giving us day by day our daily bread, in giving us skill to seize opportunities and advantages, in raising us up friends, in bringing us relief from very unlikely sources?

Thus far we have traced the history of this female worthy. More we should have been glad to know respecting her, but the Scripture now becomes silent. We have seen that she was “*a great woman*” even in circumstances. But this was the least part of her praise, and no part of her character. She did not derive her importance from external pageantry, from rank, or fortune, but from personal and religious endowments.

Her *goodness* is not, like her greatness, expressly mentioned. This was to be read in her life, in her temper, in her actions; and there it has undeniably appeared.

I have held up the picture; and while I wish you to observe the whole figure, you cannot fail to observe particular features—her kindness, her discretion, her contentment, her faith, her self-possession, her obedience to the leadings of Providence. These excellencies are seen in her, not separately and independently, but aiding each other, and blending together like the colors in the rainbow, to make a beautiful whole.

She shines by not seeking to shine. There is nothing eccentric in her motions. She does not throw herself out of her own proper sphere of action ; she never despises the duties of relative, and domestic, and common life. She not only attends to the *substance* of duty, but to all its *decencies*, to all the proprieties of time and place and manner.

But she was not untried—and we are glad she was not. A person that passed through the world smoothly and without changes, would be a poor insipid character, and a poor unedifying example. Polishing is the effect of friction. The Son of God himself was “made perfect through suffering,” and the afflictions of his people “work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Much of the excellency of this woman was derived from her difficulties ; her graces, like the stars, shining in and by the darkness of the night.

My female readers, “be not slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.” And be not discouraged ; what she was, why may not you become ? With Him is the residue of the Spirit, “who gives to all liberally, and upbraideth not.”

And though, in your resemblance of her, your name may not be published to the world or handed down to future generations, yet be sure that unstententious goodness in your circumstances will not wholly escape the notice of others, while it will be recorded in a book of remembrance, and acknowledged before an assembled universe.

The Judge of worth estimates actions, not according to bulk and splendor, but according to their

utility, their importance, and the humble and self-denying principles from which they are performed ; and in his view, a female moving along the vale of life, filling up her station with cheerfulness and decorum, and discharging duties which, though they are common and seem little, are the most essential to the welfare and happiness of the human race, is worthy of more praise than a Semiramis or a Zenobia, ruling nations, heading armies, and lauded to the skies.

LECTURE IV.

MARY MAGDALENE.

PART I.

Mary, called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils.

LUKE, viii. 2.

THIS female, it has commonly been supposed, was a woman of infamy, and *the* sinner who in the house of the Pharisee washed the Saviour's feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head ; and hence it is that a place in our own metropolis, appropriated to an unhappy class of beings, is named after her, and called "The Magdalene."

If we do not accede to this conclusion, it is not from a wish to be singular, or from a disposition that seems offended at the sovereignty of divine goodness. For has he not a right to do what he will with his own ? and is our eye evil because he is good ? "If God, willing to make his power known," and "to show the exceeding riches of his grace," sometimes calls the vilest of the vile, it surely becomes us to adore the author, and to congratulate the subject of such a wonderful salvation. But it is because we ought not to believe without evidence ; and there is no evidence,

whatever, to prove that she was such a character as she has generally been imagined.

She was of Magdala, and all we know of her concerns her singular affliction; the regard she paid to her deliverer; and the honor she received from him.

Her affliction is expressed by her having “seven devils.” This is several times mentioned as something well known, and by which she was distinguished. The question is, what does the expression import?

Some suppose that she was possessed with a number of real individual personages or beings, called demons. According to them, about the time of our Saviour’s incarnation, evil spirits were permitted to inhabit even the bodies of men, in order to render his dominion over the powers of darkness more obvious; and to show, by sensible instances, that he came to “destroy the works of the devil.” Much has been said in favor of this notion, and it has been defended principally by two arguments. First, that, in several places, the possessed of devils are distinguished from all other patients; and secondly, that things were uttered by them, implying consciousness and intelligence, which could not have proceeded from any who were only physically diseased.

Others have been disposed to inquire, how the phrase was understood by those among whom it was originally and familiarly used. Now, say they, it is certain that the Jews were accustomed to personify mental and bodily qualities, and that they employed the words “evil spirit,” and “devil,” to signify any noted malady or grievous infirmity.

Thus, Saul’s morbid melancholy was called an “evil spirit, and which, therefore, music drove away.

Referring to what they judged the mopish and ill-natured reserve and abstemiousness of John, his enemies said, “He hath a devil.” With regard to the supposed extravagance of our Saviour, the Scribes and Pharisees said, “He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?” And, regarding the woman bowed down with a *spirit* of infirmity, our Lord says, “Ought not this daughter of Abraham, whom *Satan* hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, to be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath-day?” For it was supposed that, as Satan was the first introducer of evil and the original of all misery, so he exercised a peculiar agency still, in the production of evils, as was seen in the story of Job’s successive inflictions.

The word “*seven* devils” means not a precise and certain, but a large and an indefinite number; and hence we see in what a state of dreadful suffering and peril this woman was found laboring.

But from this complication of evils and maladies, our Saviour had delivered her; nor was she insensible of the obligations she was under to his pity and power on her behalf. We read of her, therefore, “with Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many other women,” as “ministering unto him of their substance.”

This, with regard to our Saviour himself, implies indigence and dependence. He who “was rich for our sakes became poor”—so poor as that, while “foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, the Son of man had not where to lay his head”—so poor as to be a pensioner, supplied by the very creatures he made and sustained.

With regard to Mary, this reminds us of three things:—

1st, Of her *condition* in life. She was a woman of “substance.” A very few of such adhered to our Lord in the days of his flesh; and in no age of the Church have they been numerous. To them his cause has never been greatly indebted, and they have seldom done so much for its support and spread as the lower classes and common people. Their mode of life often disables them. They live up to their means, if not beyond them. They are not satisfied with a decent and allowable distinction from the vulgar. They must be fine and splendid—others must not outshine them. The same system also must be perpetuated in their family; and hence so much anxiety to lay up for the children. It is lamentable to think that a small part of what is often wasted in dress and furniture, in table luxury and fashionable amusement, would be sufficient to evangelize a village, support a school for the children of the needy, succor the poor who are ready to perish, and make the widow’s heart to sing for joy.

Secondly, It reminds us of Mary’s *generosity* and *liberality*. She was aware of the design and value of property. She answered the claims, and enjoyed the pleasure of benevolence. She did good, was “rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.”

Thirdly, It shows her *gratitude*. Her liberality, indeed, in this case, was not so much charity, as a proper return for the benefits she had received from her Lord. What was a little property to the freedom, and ease, and health, and enjoyment to which

she was now restored? Had her maladies continued, how much would she have expended upon hired attendants, useless remedies, and physicians of no value? If religion makes frequent calls on the liberality of Christians, Christians should remember what demands it has upon them. How much do we owe to it, even as to temporal good things, for "godliness has the promise of the life that now is," as well as "of that which is to come." Had not the Gospel taught them to abstain from vices which consume property, and enervate the constitution; induced them to rise early instead of wasting their strength by lying late in bed, and to be active and diligent instead of being slothful and self-indulgent—what poor creatures might they have been, and how much of what they now possess might they have expended in vanity and vexation of spirit.

But where have I led you? Mary was under greater obligations to her Lord and Saviour than what were derived from her bodily deliverance. He had saved her soul with an everlasting salvation; he had blessed her with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places; he had numbered her with his saints, and admitted her into the household of faith;—and would not his love in all this, constrain her to live not to herself but to him?

Come forward, Christian, and tell us what he has done for thy soul. Has he not delivered thee from the wrath to come? Has he not freed thee from the bondage of corruption, and brought thee into the glorious liberty of his children? Has he not called thee to inherit a kingdom prepared before the foundation of the world? Has he not redeemed thee by his precious blood? And is he not ever living to

make intercession for thee, and to make all things work together for thy good ? And will you refuse him a little pecuniary assistance ? What ought to be the one question with you, but “ What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me ? ” and what your resolution, but—

All that I am and all I have,
Shall be for ever thine ;
Whate'er my duty bids me give,
My cheerful hands resign.

Yet, if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I should give him all.

But you ask, can we “ minister ” to him now ? Had I lived when he was upon earth, I would gladly have shown him every token of regard, I would have pressed him to my dwelling, and I would have made every sacrifice to meet not only his wants but his desires.

Well, he is still in the world ; not indeed corporally, yet in such a manner as to try and prove the sincerity of your professed affection. Look to his church, look to his ministers, look to his members, look to his poor, and hear him say, “ he that receiveth these receiveth me ; ” “ inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.”

He who cured Mary by a miracle, could, by the exertion of the same power, have easily maintained himself without her ministrations ; but he was pleased to be indebted to her bounty, and to make the relief she dispensed, the means of dignifying her character. And thus it is now. He is Almighty, and independent of us in his resources, but not in his dispensations

and condescension. He could fulfil his designs and carry on his work without us; but he chooses to engage and employ us, for our sakes rather than his own; to evince our dispositions, to exercise our talents, to improve our graces, and to honor and reward our services.

But we are led to view this female not only as a grateful and generous contributor to his support, but as an attendant on his ministry. "He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God; and the twelve were with him, and certain women which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities;" and the first of the number is said to be Mary, called Magdalene." We cannot wonder at this part of her conduct. Who would not, if it had been in their power, have followed such a teacher whithersoever he went, hanging upon his lips, and wondering at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth? Yet this part of her conduct is, perhaps, liable to an exceptionable kind of imitation. It may be necessary therefore to observe that there was something peculiar in this case. The excitement was extraordinary, "never man spake like this man." Our Lord was near to justify her. Mary was a woman of property, and it would seem had no family ties; nor is it likely that she thus always attended our Saviour, but only on particular and occasional excursions. However this may be, we are sure that her example is not recorded to sanction those females who are idle, wandering about from house to house, even in religious habitudes, and roving after favorite preachers, to the neglect of common and relative duties. Eccentric zeal is

commonly more hurtful than beneficial ; public and ostentatious actions are much more to be suspected than the regular sober engagements of our stations ; which, being performed without notice, require principle to produce them. In the course of my own observation, I have met with females whose zeal has exceeded their discretion ; they have been led astray by their favorite preachers ; and through their unseasonable absences from home, and the frequency and lateness of their services, they have injured maternal economy, disaffected the minds of their husbands, deranged domestic order, and caused their good to be evil spoken of. Yet when reproved, they have resented it ; and when reproached, they have considered themselves as suffering for righteousness' sake. The Lord preserve you from errors on the right hand as well as on the left ; may he teach and enable you to "walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise ;" and may "your love abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that you may approve things that are excellent," and be not only "sincere," but "without offence till the day of Christ."

Mary attended our Saviour in his last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, and was a mournful spectator of his crucifixion. "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene." These good women were not there with any view to his deliverance ; for what in such a case could they have effected ?—but to sympathize with him, to observe his behavior, to hear and record his dying words, and to show how willing they were to be known as his followers, and to suffer with him.

And herein they appear to peculiar advantage : for when all the disciples, (except John, and he at first fled,) had forsaken their Lord, these females were not deterred by the dreadfulness of the scene, the reproaches of the priests and scribes, or the fury of the populace. What affection and courage were here ! and one of these was produced by the other ; for “ perfect love casteth out fear.” In difficult duties and trials, much depends upon conviction, but more upon affection. “ Love is strong as death—many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.”

Our Saviour has now yielded up the ghost, and we find Mary Magdalene one of the few who attended his burial. For when Joseph had gone “ to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus, he took it down and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid ;” and “ the women, also, which came with him from Galilee, *followed after*, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid, and they returned and prepared spices and ointments.” This was in order to embalm his precious corpse. The action was of a mixed nature. It was expressive of attachment, but it betrayed a want of reflection and faith. Had they remembered the language of David’s prophecy, had they believed what he himself had often told them, that he should rise again the third day, they would not have thought of embalming him who could see no corruption. But “ a bruised reed he will not break, and smoking flax will he not quench.” He will not cast away his people for their imperfections. He looketh to the heart, and in their endeavors to honor him, he pardons the evil and accepts the good. Mary’s

conduct, therefore, notwithstanding its infirmity and error, is recorded with approbation.

Nothing can be more interesting than the remaining passages of her history, but the review of these must be reserved to another opportunity.

In the meantime keep in memory what you have received, and be experimental and practical proofs, that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."— "Be ye not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

LECTURE V.

MARY MAGDALENE.

PART II.

Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.—*MARKE*, xvi. 9.

WE now resume the history of this extraordinary female. We have seen her our Lord's patient, and delivered by him from a tremendous calamity. We have seen her grateful, and ministering to his temporal wants. We have seen her a zealous attendant on his ministry, an heroical spectator of his death, and a deep mourner at his burial.

Let us now proceed.

Mary sleeps, but her heart waketh, and she is up early, and “at the sepulchre while it is yet dark.” This was the first day of the week, and the first Christian Sabbath, called the “Lord’s Day,” in memory of his rising from the dead and resting from his work of redemption, as God did from his work of creation; and equally and infinitely deserving to be pronounced “very good.” Since then, how many of these all-important seasons have revolved.

Fifty-two of these “days of the Son of man” have annually returned. How many, then, in 1853 years, have blessed the world! And in these ninety-six thousand, three hundred and fifty-six sabbaths, how many prayers have been offered, how many praises have been sung, how many words of eternal life have been delivered, how many have been turned from darkness to light, and what signs and wonders have been done “in the name of the holy child Jesus:”—and how many, encouraged, refreshed, and strengthened in the way everlasting, have “called the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable,” and have gratefully and adoringly said, “This is the day the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it!”

Mary leads us back to the very commencement of the first of this immense and all-important series.

Early as she was at the sepulchre, some one had been there before her, for “she saw the stone taken away.” This had occasioned her great anxiety as she was coming; but when arrived she saw how groundless her apprehensions had been. This is not the only instance in which the followers of Christ have found things better than their forebodings and fears. Duties, in prospect and imagination deemed impracticable, and trials insupportable, have been easily performed and endured, when the proper and actual season came. “All these things are against me,” said Jacob, when all were working together for him; and after awhile, he found it as clear as it was true. The Lord gives grace to help in time of need, according to the promise, “as thy days so shall thy strength be.”

Without stopping to make any inquiry, and taking it for granted that the body was removed, either by

friends or foes, “she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.” Why did she not think that probably or possibly he might be risen ? But she is disconcerted and disturbed by the very thing that naturally and obviously tended to convince and comfort her.

It is easy to imagine how strangely this would appear to herself afterwards. But in a cloudy and dark day, and while the mind is under the pressure of some powerful grief, such perplexing thoughts arise, and such improbable conclusions are drawn, as render us, in review and reflection, a wonder to ourselves. “I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes ; nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplication when I cried unto thee.”

What was the effect of her communication ? “Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together : and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.”

It is pleasing to observe, that though Peter had sadly denied his Lord, he has not forsaken the company of the disciples, neither is he forsaken by them. The Saviour had looked upon him not only with an eye of reproof, but of compassion, and melted him into repentance ; and his disciples had imbibed his temper, and were disposed to “restore a brother overtaken in a fault, in the spirit of meekness, considering themselves lest they also should be tempted.”

It is worthy also of notice, how constantly we find Peter and John connected in the sacred history.

What was the reason of their peculiar intimacy? Each of them had a brother among the apostles; but “there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”

Attachments often depend on things which are not easily described or accounted for, or even ascertained. It is commonly supposed that those who attract each other and unite, must resemble each other. But Peter and John seem to have been more dissimilar than any other two of the apostles. Yet may not this very circumstance have been one of the causes of their peculiar union and fellowship? Peter knew that the excellencies of John were opposed to his own imperfections, and would tend to meet and rectify them.

And this leads us to remark how God varies his gifts, and how different are the endowments of good men. John was more contemplative, Peter more active; John was more patient and affectionate, Peter more eager and severe; John was the eye, Peter the hand; John outruns Peter, Peter outbraves John; John looks into the sepulchre, Peter enters.

“Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.”

Here is an example of doing everything decently and in order; but we principally remark from hence, the improbability of the pretence of his enemies that the body was taken away.

There may be robbers of tombs; but would they steal the corpse and leave the apparel, especially if it were fine linen? Would they not rather carry away

the body in its grave clothes than naked. Yet if they did strip the body, would they, in such circumstances of haste and fear, fold them up and place them in separate positions?

And herein we see the inaptitude and backwardness of the disciples to believe the Saviour's resurrection. So far were they from being credulous as to that auspicious event, they seemed not to have thought of it. And we here find that even Peter and John, after their inspection of the grave, left it, concluding that all was over. "Then the disciples went away again unto their own home."

Not so Mary. She did not, could not leave the inspiring spot. "Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping." How natural was this sorrow at the thought of his sufferings, and the loss she had sustained of his presence by his death, and now even of his sacred body by wickedness and fraud. And does she weep and seek in vain? "And as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain."

We say nothing of the number, the attire, or the attitude, of these angels; but you may ask, how was it that Peter and John, when they looked into the sepulchre, did not see them as well as Mary? To which we answer, that those heavenly beings can render themselves visible and invisible at pleasure; they also act under authority, for though they "excel in strength," they "do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word;" and they were now directed only to encourage and comfort Mary.

Hence they immediately and kindly inquire into her distress—"Woman, why weepest thou?" One naturally expects, as in the various instances of old, that Mary would have been not only surprised but terrified at the sight and dress of these celestial visitants; but we find nothing of this in her; and what would more fully prove our remark, her mind was so wholly absorbed in her present concern, that no occurrence, however extraordinary, could divert her from it.

She therefore replies—"Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Still, here is no thought of his resurrection! But, O! Mary, does thy distress yet continue? Can no creature satisfy thee? Will not even angels serve as a substitute for thy Lord and Saviour? Art thou saying—"Whom have I in heaven but him? and there is none on earth that I desire besides him. Where is he whom my soul loveth?" Thou shalt soon find him.

She has hardly answered these heavenly messengers, before she hears the tread of some one behind her; and "turning herself back, she saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus." The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and often does for them more than they ask or think. Mary only inquires for his dead body, and, lo! the living Saviour himself appeared! Thus he may be near us, and even with us, and we not be aware of his presence.

To account for Mary's ignorance, we have only to reflect that her mind was filled with grief, that her eyes were suffused with tears, and that he appeared

in a dress he had never worn before. But if Mary does not know him, he knows her, and says unto her, "Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" But did he not know? He had seen her early approach; he had witnessed her sighs as she surveyed the sepulchre. Yes, he perfectly knew Mary's grief and Mary's desire, but he would know them from herself. He knows all our sins and their aggravations better than we do, but he requires us to confess them; and he knows all our wants and their circumstances better than we ourselves do, but he requires us to express them, that we may be affected by them, and be prepared for the display of his mercy and grace.

These words were the first he spoke when he arose from the dead, and they showed that he rose with the same heart with which he died; and that, though he had begun to enter into his glory, he had not forgotten his followers on earth.

But "she supposed him to be the gardener." The mistake was not wonderful. She was now in a garden, and it was likely that a rich man like Joseph would have a man to dress it, and who might be early at his work. But what does she mean when she says—"Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." She could not do this personally, and she was not sure of doing it by means of others. Would not his enemies have opposed it? Would Joseph, who had begged the body, and lodged it in his own tomb, have been willing to allow it? And what would she have done with the corpse, had her wish

been fulfilled? Here we see the nature and force of love. Fear says—"there's a lion in the way, I shall be slain in the street;" but love overlooks difficulties, judges of success by wish or endeavor, and seems to think of nothing but its achievement. It is said, "The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits;" and from the darings of faith and zeal they have accomplished a thousand things which indolence and cowardice would have deemed no better than madness or presumption.

Our Lord would now manifest himself to her; and the manner in which he does this is the most simple, suitable, and striking. He does not chide her for any of her mistakes, nor does he break forth in the rays of his glory. Great emotions are dangerous—our frame cannot bear excessive excitement. When the news of the surrender of Cornwallis and his army was announced, the doorkeeper of the American congress fell down dead. When Gabriel appeared to Daniel, "My comeliness," says Daniel, "was turned in me to corruption, and I retained no strength." The Saviour might have shown himself in a way that would have deprived Mary of the use of her sense and reason. He, therefore, says enough just to awaken attention, and gently set her mind in motion without overpowering her. He uses only one word, and this was not his own name, but hers.—"Jesus saith unto her, *Mary*." This mildly and yet completely discovers him as the speaker, for she knows his voice, and could say with the church, "It is the voice of my beloved." This may, in a measure, be physically accounted for. The aperture of the voice in the throat, though so

small in diameter, is capable of issuing numberless sounds, not two of which are perfectly alike. Hence persons are recognized by the voice as well as by the sight. When Joseph made himself known to his brethren, saying, "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt," it is probable they remembered his voice, though they had not heard it for more than twenty years. I have known instances of vocal recognitions of a longer date. Mary had often heard the Saviour in public and in private; and would she ever forget the accents of those lips into which "grace was poured," or the manner of one "who spake as never man spake"?

A circumstance is noticed here which seems more distinctly to recall to mind this affecting scene. Mary "turned herself," as she had done before, when she supposed she saw the gardener. Her doing this again shows that she had in the meantime resumed her first posture, and was still gazing with weeping eyes towards the sepulchre.

It appears, too, that the moment she recognized the Saviour, she was filled with unutterable sentiments; she cried, "Rabboni; which is to say, Master," and she fell at his feet to embrace them and adore. But "Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

This prohibition was in a great measure personal and temporary; for we find that when he appeared to the women who were fleeing from the sepulchre, they were permitted to embrace him; "they came

and held him by the feet, and worshipped him." This was allowed them to calm their minds and remove their terror, for they were sore afraid. But Mary was not under such alarm, and her grief was dispersed by his calling her by name. The circumstances of an action so exceedingly vary, that what is proper for one person, place, or season, may be improper for another.

The prohibition of Mary was founded on two things. The one was that the Saviour was not immediately ascending, and she would have other opportunities of doing him homage. The other, that the state of his disciples was such, that it was necessary for them to be assured of his resurrection without delay, and therefore she should prefer usefulness to indulgence.

What a disposition does this discover in our Lord and Saviour. He pleased not himself; he preferred the consolation of his disciples to the personal honor he was going to receive.

We also admire Mary. She submits without reasoning or complaint. It is enough for her to know that he is alive, and that she has an opportunity to prove her regard to his authority. "Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her." Let us learn, like her, to do his will implicitly, denying ourselves, and "looking not every man on his own things, but every man also upon the things of others," and especially the things that are Jesus Christ's.

To conclude, all this should animate and encourage us. We are assured, not by promises only, but by examples, that if we seek him he will be found of us;

that though for awhile we may be perplexed and afflicted, the Lord will in due time appear to our joy, and we shall not be ashamed.

Thus we see this woman sowing in tears and reaping in joy. She was the first that saw the Lord after he rose from the dead ; the first that heard him speak ; the first that published his resurrection. She was therefore an apostle to his apostles.

With propriety, therefore, have we brought her so largely under your review, as a character whom the Lord delighted to honor.

But you will observe, that though God's grace is sovereign, his rewards are conferred according to an established order, and this is the law of the house,— “To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly.” “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.”

Mary had not only been distinguished by her affliction and deliverance, but by her devotedness to the Saviour, by her fortitude and constancy, and by her zeal in his service. And we know who hath said, “Them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.”

Finally, what a paradise must this garden have been to Mary. Could she ever disregard or forget the spot, or the interview she there enjoyed ? Yet she soon had another and a nobler interview, when she saw him, not trembling at the mouth of the grave, but with every tear wiped from her eyes ; he in his glory, and she ever with the Lord.

And such an interview awaits all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity ; for though “it doth not yet

appear what they shall be," this they "know that when he shall appear, they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is."

Happy he who can say, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

LECTURE VI.

HANNAH.

PART I.

And she said, O my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed ; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him.—*1 SAM.*, i. 26, 27.

To know persons completely, it is necessary to view them in various situations and conditions. Character is not only displayed by trials, but it very much results from them. Both prosperity and adversity are states of acknowledged temptation ; and few can equally encounter such opposite dangers. Few are equally furnished with “the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,” and through honor and dishonor, evil report and good report, hopes disappointed and wishes accomplished, can alike maintain their heavenly principles, and glorify God in their body and spirit, which are his.

But the wisdom that is from above can teach this difficult lesson ; and under its divine influence persons have been enabled to accommodate themselves to every varying scene ; in affliction they have not been swallowed up by overmuch sorrow, and in success and indulgence they have not been exalted above

measure. Troubles have issued in prayer, and mercies have gendered confidence and praise.

Of this Paul is an illustrious example—"For," said he, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Another instance of this attainment is now to pass under our review, in this brief but interesting history of Hannah.

Let us know her heart's bitterness, and intermeddle with her joy.

She first comes before us in circumstances of disappointment and mortification. Her affliction was aggravated by reproach, for "her adversary provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb." But who was this adversary? She was one of her own household, for Elkanah, her husband, had two wives. Hannah seems to have been the first; but as she afforded no offspring, he probably took Peninnah, in hopes of supplying the deficiency. Abraham had done this with regard to Sarah; and what was the consequence? We now see the effects of his unbelief, and impatience, and of turning aside to crooked ways, instead of walking uprightly. And in the case before us, was the conduct of Elkanah justified by the result? Let us read and see.

In the days of Malachi this evil practice abounded; and observe how the prophet speaks of it. "The Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherous-

ly ; yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one ? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one ? That he might seek a godly seed." Here we find that marriage was originally confined to a single pair ; and we see the reason. It was not from want of power or kindness in God. He could have made more than one Eve for Adam, and would have done it had his welfare required it. But it was because of the advantage derivable from individual union, especially with regard to the children who should arise from it, and be trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And our Saviour in answering the question of the disciples said, " Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives : but from the beginning it was not so," clearly deciding that polygamy was never a duty, but a permission ; and that the permission was a stigma on their national character, and did not alter the nature of the evil itself. Suppose polygamy was not prohibited by precept, or condemned by penalty, there would surely be enough against it ; if it can be proved inexpedient, unreasonable, injurious, pernicious to the welfare of children, subversive of the order, and peace, and happiness of families.

Hannah's adversary seems peculiarly unprincipled and ill-disposed. A noble mind is always generous and sympathizing. If it possesses any exclusive advantages, it will not be forward to display and boast of them ; and if it sees a fellow creature in a humbler situation, it will not labor to increase his sense of deficiencies, but rather to diminish and soften it. But Peninnah delights in another's pain and humili-

tion. She values herself on what implies no merit, and derides another for that which is purely her misfortune and affliction.

"The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy." But we may observe, that though envy loves to expose the defects of another, it springs from his excellencies or advantages, and feeds upon some real or imaginary privilege. Accordingly, we are here informed of the occasion of this woman's present malevolence. It is well known that at the Jewish festivals a part of the victims offered in sacrifice was allowed to the offerer, upon which he and his family and friends afterwards feasted. At this season Elkanah treated Hannah with peculiar attention and distinction. "And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions; but unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion." It is called in the margin a double portion. To give such portion was a usage expressive of great preference. It has been asked, was the marked partiality in this case justifiable? Some have been disposed to commend, and others to blame. There is a considerable difference between the *feeling* and the *expression* of partiality; the one is much more in our power than the other. The *display* of it is commonly prejudicial to the object. Who does not remember the "coat of many colors"? I have more than once seen a bird distinguished by a piece of red ribbon; and no sooner flying off than pursued and assaulted by some of the same species till beaten to the ground.

The blame we attach to a man is not always so much for acting wrong, as for bringing himself into

circumstances and conditions which will hardly allow of his acting right. Piety says, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths;" and Prudence says, "Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established." Elkanah forgets this, and his folly fixes him in a state that leaves him not the possibility of escaping evil and reproach. His partiality seemed demanded, and yet it draws upon the favorite fresh trouble, and increased insults from her rival, whose sons and daughters would naturally follow the example of the mother. "It is better to dwell in the corner of the house-top, than with a brawling woman, and in a wide house." "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith." What then must this good man feel, to find his spirit ruffled even in his religious exercises, and domestic strifes and contentions indulged under the eye of God, and in the service of the sanctuary? What could Peninnah think of approaching the altar of the God of peace and love with a temper full of envy and malice, and a tongue "set on fire of hell"? How much better is omission than perversion, and neglect than inconsistency? Shall blessing and cursing proceed out of the same mouth? "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil." "Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." "I will, therefore, that men pray

everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting."

Year after year Hannah had been accustomed to bear all this provocation, and till now she seems to have endured it patiently. But where is the mind that always continues in one frame? Where, unless in him who was "fairer than the children of men," do we find grace that never declines in kind or degree? It is much to the honor of Hannah that even now her temper is calm, and that she renders not railing for railing; but her tender spirit at last begins to sink, and her full heart to break. "Therefore she wept, and did not eat. Then said Elkanah, her husband, to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?" But soothing as this was, it produced no effect. She therefore "rose up;" and whither does she go? She repairs to the temple, and gives herself unto prayer. "God is known in his palaces for a refuge;" and every experienced believer will say—

In every new distress,
I'll to his house repair;
I'll think upon his wondrous grace,
And seek deliverance there.

Observe the difference of persons in trouble. Natural men—men of the world—in their affliction, commonly flee to creatures, either to accuse them as the instruments of their sufferings, or to derive from them the means of their relief. But a man taught from above avoids both these evils. Instead of

quarrelling with instruments, he says, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." And instead of depending upon creature comforters, he says, "Therefore will I look unto the Lord ; I will wait for the God of my salvation ; my God will hear me." "Is any afflicted ?" says James, "let him pray." Prayer brings us into the presence of God ; and intercourse with him checks every evil passion, calms the troubled breast, and brings the mind into a state of preparedness for every dispensation. And while it is thus useful by its *exercise*, what may we not hope for from its *answers* ? For he "never said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain." Who has not entered this sanctuary ? Who has not tried this resource ? Who has not ascertained its success ? Who has not said, "It is good for me to draw near to God ?"

To return to Hannah. "And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore." The following circumstances attending this prayer are recorded, and worthy of attention :—

First, It was accompanied with a vow, expressed in language the most suitable and pious. "And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head." Are we desiring anything of God ? We ought to think of *him*, as well as of *ourselves*. It is thus we pray according to his will, and then we may know that he heareth us. But many "ask and receive not, because

they ask amiss, that they may consume it upon their lusts." Many never look beyond their own accommodation and indulgence, and therefore there is nothing conditional in their importunity. But a good man has always a reserve in his desires as to all temporal things. He refers himself to the divine wisdom for the propriety of the success of his petitions, and cannot desire to be gratified unless God is glorified. And he wishes God not only to be glorified in his trials, but also honored in all his blessings. Therefore, if he has wealth, he will inquire how it can be sanctified ; if he has genius, how it can be employed ; if he has children, how he may train them up in the fear and service of God.

Secondly, Observe the manner of her devotion. "And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart ; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard ; therefore Eli thought she had been drunken."

This implies the nature of her case. It was a peculiar one, and one which she could not pour into every ear. There are things which we may not be at liberty to communicate to the nearest relation, or to the dearest friend ; but to God only.

Hereby she testified her belief that God was omniscient. She knew that words were not necessary to inform a being to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secret is hid. It is better to want language than disposition when we address him, who "seeketh such to worship him as worship in spirit and in truth."

It showed also, that in dealing with God, she

desired the notice of none besides him. Jehu said, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord of hosts." The Pharisees prayed in the corners of the streets, and to be seen of men. "But," says the Saviour, "thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." The temple, as well as the closet, is a place appointed for prayer; but though the devotion be public in the performance, it may be private in the experience, and in the midst of a multitude we may have to do with God only.

Thirdly, Observe the misconception and censure to which it gave rise. "Eli thought she had been drunken. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee." This was the very reproach which Peter and his fellows met with on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost gave them utterance in so many languages which they had never learned. The multitude "mocking, said, These men are full of new wine." But this reproach came from enemies. But here we find a good man, a man with whom days should speak—a man, even the priest of the Most High God, issuing an equally rash censure. May we not, therefore, infer that others are liable to similar erroneous decisions? Eli mistook, by making outward appearances and equivocal circumstances the ground of his sad conclusion. And hence the command, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."

Soine thus err by attaching importance to opinions of their own devising, and rules of their own forming in religion, and so conceive unfavorably of every one in proportion as they deviate from them.

Some err by hearkening to the statements of others, and omitting such investigations as would lead them, as much to esteem a character as they now condemn.

Some err in judging by the effects of constitutional temperament. They find a man of great vivacity, and loquaciousness, and ready to speak on all occasions, and to every one he meets, concerning his own experience and the things of God; and they set him down as a very lively Christian, and of great spirituality. They see another shrinking from observation, and seemingly afraid to open his lips, lest he should utter more than he feels; and they consider him as a lifeless soul, and under the fear of man. But if they duly reflected, and judged properly, they would ascribe much to the mercury of the one and the phlegm of the other, which affect them in all other things as well as in religion.

Many are too much biased in their judgment by real faults and failings. These need not be pleaded for; but through natural infirmity there may be much irregularity, where there is also not a little share of sincerity. Our Saviour compassionately said of the disciples whom he ought not to have found sleeping, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." We are called to "bear one another's burdens," and if a brother be overtaken in a fault, the spiritual are to "restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering themselves lest they also be tempted."

Seeing, then, we are in so much danger of judging wrongfully, let us remember the admonition of the apostle, "Let us not judge one another any more;" and let us pray for that charity which "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endur-

eth all things." Especially let us guard against vilifying or censuring the devotion of others, or the mode of their worship ; lest we deem as hypocrisy, or fanaticism, or superstition, what is truly conscientious and accepted of God.

To return to Eli. Allowing a strangeness in Hannah's manner, and a peculiarity in her appearance, surely her general conduct might have led him to judge her less cruelly and criminally than to charge her with drunkenness in the very house of God.

If any excuse could be made for him, it would perhaps be this—It is probable that he had seen many abuses of this kind, some even in his own family, and he may have stationed himself by a part of the temple to observe, and endeavor to repress such scandals. The guilty often occasion suspicions and reproaches with regard to the innocent. When a disease is epidemical, many are feared who are not infected. David had been cruelly deceived by Ahitophel, and therefore said in his haste, "All men are liars."

Observe, *Fourthly*, the manner in which Hannah received the sad and insulting rebuke. "And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord; I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial; for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto." This was admirable. She makes no rash appeal to Heaven, such as is often the effect and proof of hardened guilt. She utters no bitter complaint against her accuser. She does not bid him to look at home, and upbraid him with the conduct of his own sons. She does not tell

him how ill and unbecoming it was for one, in his place and office, to abuse a poor disconsolate woman at the footstool of divine mercy. She knew that a proper representation of her condition and conduct in respectful language would be the best argument in her favor, and would possess the good but mistaken man with better notions respecting her ; and so it fell out. "Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace : and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him." Eli was an imperfect character, yet there were in him traces of real excellencies, and his ingenuousness is one of them.

He is open to conviction, and willing to acknowledge himself mistaken, and ready to make amends for the injury he had done her, by his blessing and his prayers. A lively writer has said, "I was mistaken" are the three hardest words to pronounce in the English language. Yet it seems but acknowledging that we are wiser than we were before to *see* our error, and humbler than we were before to *own* it. But so it is ; and Goldsmith observes that Frederic the Great did himself more honor by his letter to his senate, stating that he had just lost a great battle by his own fault, than by all the victories he had won. Perhaps our greatest perfection here is not to escape imperfections, but to see and acknowledge, and lament, and correct them.

Finally, Observe her relief and satisfaction. "And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad." Her satisfaction arose from two things. First, the rectifying Eli's mistake concerning her, and the blessing he had pro-

nounced upon her ; for what can be more consoling than to stand fair in the judgment of those we value ? " To live in the estimation of the wise and good," says Robinson, " is like walking in an eastern spice grove."

Secondly, the confidence in God, which is derived from prayer. Before the blessing we ask in prayer is actually granted, it may be anticipated ; and therefore it is said, " Let the heart of them rejoice that seek God," and " Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." We may entirely rely upon God's word in his own way :—such " hope maketh not ashamed." It is thus he keeps in perfect peace the minds of those that are stayed upon him, because they trust in him. Says Hannah, I have spread my case before him, and I have left all with him, and all will be well—well if he were to deny me ; but " he will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. This shall be written for the generation to come, and the people that shall be created shall praise the Lord."

And what says her experience to all the Lord's followers ? " Be careful for nothing ; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God ; and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

But they must now leave Shiloh and return to Ramah ; for there was their home, and there they were to re-enter on the ordinary duties, enjoyments, and cares of life. But see, even on this occasion, their diligence and their devotion : " And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the Lord,

and returned." It is good to begin the day early with God; and whatever lies before us, to seek first his favor and assistance. When persons are in such haste as to set out on a journey, or engage in any enterprise, without asking counsel of God, and feeling their dependence upon him, they are not likely to succeed; or success is not likely to prove a blessing. Nor will it avail them to plead the want of time, for "there is a time for every purpose and every work," and if leisure be not found, diligence, prudence, economy, and early rising will furnish it.

LECTURE VII.

HANNAH.

PART II.

For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him.—1 SAM., i. 27.

THE birth of a child is one of the most important events that ever takes place in our world. But for the frequency of the occurrence, it would be deemed little less than a miracle of nature and providence. The structure of the body, the powers of the soul, the union of flesh and spirit, the provision made to nourish and preserve life, all proclaim that we are “fearfully and wonderfully made.”

The birth of any infant is a far greater event than the production of the sun. The sun sees not his own light, feels not his own heat, and, with all his grandeur, will cease to be; but that infant which began to breathe only yesterday, will hear the heavens pass away with a great noise, and see the elements melt with fervent heat. That infant is possessed of reason, conscience, and immortality. It is true these principles are not yet developed, but they are in embryo, and the oak is contained in the acorn, and the day in the dawn.

There is also a relative, as well as a personal importance attached to the birth of a child; for who knows what that child may become, what good or evil he may occasion, what misery or happiness he may produce?

The birth of Samuel was attended with circumstances peculiarly important and interesting. It was a blessing much desired, and long delayed. It was obtained in answer to prayer, and produced one of the most holy, useful, and illustrious characters in all history. No wonder, therefore, the Scripture so signalizes the event. Let us pursue the history.

Hannah had prayed to be remembered, and “the Lord remembered her, and she conceived;” and thus her grand wish was accomplishing, and she was becoming the joyful mother, not only of a child, but of a son that would more than realize all her expectations and wishes. And can she *forget him*, who has thus graciously *remembered her*?

1st, *The very name shall perpetuate the memory of the mercy.* “And she called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord.” Thus she could never pronounce the name without recalling the occasion. After the same manner, Joseph and Moses named their children, to be momentos; and so, Samuel called the stone he had set up, “Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.” So let it be with us.

Why should the wonders he hath wrought,
Be lost in silence and forgot?

“Bless the Lord, O my soul!” says David, “and forget not all his benefits.”

Secondly, She undertakes the early care of him in

person. When, therefore, Elkanah and his family went up as usual to Shiloh, she determined to remain at home for this very purpose. "She said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned." Here we find Hannah in a state of reduced activity, and partial confinement; a state the most interesting; a state of pleasing expectation and awful anxiety, week after week, and month after month, concerning a life to be preserved, and a life given, with their respective consequences.

In this state the utmost attention, and kindness, and tenderness, were her well-deserved due; and it is pleasing to see the exemplariness of her husband in his disposition and behavior towards her.

Though all the males were required to repair to Shiloh thrice in the year, the obligation did not extend to females. If they loved the sanctuary, and desired the privilege of attendance, they travelled with their husbands, and went to the house of God in company, when their situation and circumstances allowed. But frequently this was not the case; and everything is to be "done decently and in order;" and "if one duty," says Bishop Hopkins, "destroys another, God rejects it as a murderer." He requires mercy and not sacrifice, and dispenses with public institutions when we are obeying private and domestic calls.

Hannah cheerfully bore the loss of Shiloh's privileges, in order to discharge a home obligation; and Elkanah acquiesces in her proposal, and dispenses with her company and conversation; and, how good and pleasant it is, when yoke-fellows draw the same way, each according with the other, especially in all the concerns of economy, charity, and piety. "And

Elkanah, her husband, said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good : tarry until thou have weaned him ; only the Lord establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him."

Here, we have an opportunity to say a few words with regard to a common, and, we fear, increasing evil : I mean the abandonment of maternal nursing.

Surely, nothing can be a more ungrateful return, than to treat with neglect and disdain the provision which the goodness and kindness of God have obviously made for the performance of this duty.

And is it not a violence offered to nature ; and such a violence as is unknown to all the inferior animals, and to the most barbarous nations, and to the polished Greeks and Romans in their purer ages ?

Were I to speak of its physical injuriousness, I might seem to get off my own ministerial and moral ground. But, here, I can appeal for my censure to proper and qualified authorities. Have not the most eminent physicians told us, that the sudden check of the nutritious fluid may be of the worst consequences to the mother, by gendering disease, and even risking life itself ? Have they not told us that there are many disorders incident to women, of which their nursing is the most effectual cure ; that delicate constitutions are strengthened by it ; that when a mother suckles her child, her complexion becomes clearer, her spirits more uniformly cheerful, her appetite more regular, and her general habits stronger ? Have they not affirmed even, that fewer women die while they are nursing, than at any equal period of their lives ? Have they not told us what injury the babe may sustain, by being deprived of its own natural nourishment ;

yea, and that a far greater number of those children die that are nursed by aliens, than of such as are nursed maternally? And is it not strange that a mother should deprive herself of the most exquisite pleasure of tender and endeared sympathy and kindness; or that a woman of sensibility can see the darling of her soul hanging on the breast of another, and stroking the cheek of a stranger; engrossing her maternal rights, and sure to be more loved than herself?

Hannah not only nurses her own child, but dedicates him to the Lord. “And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the Lord in Shiloh: and the child was young. And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli. And she said, Oh my lord! as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him.” What a number of reflections arises from hence.

We see what changes in conditions and feelings individuals may experience. At evening-time it may be light, and the shadow of death may be turned into the morning. The Jews, when the Lord turned again their captivity, were like men that dream; the deliverance was so great, sudden, and unlooked-for. Never therefore despond. To use what Cowper calls the beautiful words of Dr. Watts:—

The Lord can clear the darkest skies,
Can gives us day for night;
Make drops of saered sorrow rise
. To rivers of delight.

We see that the Lord will cause earnest persevering prayer, in due time, to yield matter for praise. It is his character—"O thou that hearest prayer." "Tis his promise—"Ask and it shall be given you." "Tis his memorial in all generations—"He never said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain."

We see that the answers of prayers ought to be observed and noticed. Many never think of their prayers after they have offered them; but is it not a mockery of the Supreme Being to call forth his attention, by an appearance of devotion, when we never mean to regard his benefits? It was otherwise with Moses. "The Lord," says he, "hearkened unto me at that time also." So it was with David. "The Lord," says he, "hath heard the voice of my weeping;" and he derives two advantages from the observation—gratitude and confidence. "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice, and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

We should also remark that it is our duty, not only to observe, but to own and confess such returns of mercy, for the glory of God, and for the sake of others, that they also may be encouraged to trust and pray. "Come," says David, "come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together."

Again, hear this admirable thanksgiver. "Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord." Vows made ought to be remembered and fulfilled. We are not fond of

vowing; we much prefer praying. "Beware," says Cowper,

" Beware of Peter's word,
Nor confidently say
I never will deny Thee, Lord,
But, Grant I never may."

But vows are not unlawful nor useless, when formed in the strength of divine grace; "But," says Solomon, "when thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it, for he hath no pleasure in fools; pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay." Yet how many transgressors are here. How many have vowed how liberal they would be if God would prosper them in their endeavors to get wealth; but when riches have increased they have set their heart upon them; and have even done less in the cause of God and of the poor than before; not only proportionably, but even actually less. How many have we known, who, when sick and apprehensive of dying, have vowed, if they recovered, what a different course they would run; yet no sooner hath health returned, than their iniquities, like the wind, have carried them away.

Here even good men have failed. Hezekiah said, "O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me;" and he rebuked his disorder, and, "in love to his soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption." And for the time he felt well, and said, "For the grave cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day; the father to the children shall make known thy truth. The Lord was ready to save me; there-

fore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord. Yet Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him, for his heart was lifted up."

"And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, if God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God; and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee." Yet how long did he linger, neglectful of his engagement; and it was not till God reminded and summoned him, that he said, "Let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went."

But hear Hannah:—"Therefore I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord." It is added, "And he worshipped the Lord there." But of whom is this spoken? Some say of Eli. If so, it refers not to his ordinary worship, but to the present particular instance of his adoration and praise on Hannah's behalf, and which would afford another proof of something good in his character, amidst all his mistakes and infirmities.

But the worshipper seems to be Samuel himself. And why should this be thought strange or wonderful? He was a peculiar and extraordinary infant, and might have given early indications of his future ability and greatness. But without this supposition, have we not read that "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God hath perfected praise"? We have known children, who,

as young as Sainuel now was, have evinced true piety and devotion. And suppose the language he used was not of his own invention ? Would a form have been improper ? Would not his pious mother have as early as possible taught him to pray ?

All present would probably be struck with the little orator. But see the mother ! how she gazes ! how she wipes her eyes ! how she lifts her hands ! how ready she must have been to exclaim, "this child is mine, even mine!"

Nor could she, impressed as she was, restrain her feelings ; but she breaks forth in strains becoming the saint, as well as the mother. "And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord ; mine horn is exalted in the Lord ; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies ; because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the Lord ; for there is none beside thee ; neither is there any rock like our God. Talk no more exceeding proudly ; let not arroganey come out of your mouth ; for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread ; and they that were hungry ceased : so that the barren hath born seven ; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. The Lord killeth, and maketh alive ; he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich ; he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's,

and he hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness ; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces ; out of heaven shall be thunder upon them ; the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth ; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed."

On these words we shall not have space to enlarge ; we drop only a few hints. We see Hannah had poetical talent, and which could be of no mean kind, since we find David, the chief Hebrew bard, not ashamed to borrow from her. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people."

It is here said she "prayed;" but we find no supplication or petition ; only praise and thanksgiving ; but praise and thanksgiving are an essential part of prayer, and should always accompany it. Hence says Paul, "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

When she prayed in the "bitterness of her soul," it was "in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard ;" but now she had obtained the blessing, she cannot hold her peace. Such is the difference between sorrow and joy. Sorrow seeks retreat, and the anguish bearer "sitteth alone, and keepeth silence, and putteth his mouth in the dust."

But joy is exciting and manifestative. “Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; to the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Lord, my God, I will give thanks unto thee forever.” Has the shepherd found the sheep which he had lost? “He calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me.”

From her own particular case, she takes occasion to speak glorious things of God, of his being, his attributes, and works, and ways; and to tell what he is doing in the world, and in the church. The events to which she refers are often not considered at all, or they are viewed as the effects of fortune or chance; but she views them as the purposes and performances of him “who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will;” and it is the supreme of piety to see and acknowledge God in all things.

It is commonly imagined that Hannah has even an allusion to the coming and character of the Messiah himself. She certainly is the first who pronounces that “name which is above every name”—“anointed of the Lord.” It is no disproof of this supposition, that she might not understand the full and evangelical import of the term. The Prophets often delivered things which they afterwards searched in order to understand.

Finally, there is one sentence, promise, threatening, admonition, which we should always retain, and often revolve—“He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.”

It is probable that, as moved by the Holy Ghost, she composed this ode for this occasion, during the few days she continued at Shiloh, and where care was taken to secure and publish the contents.

However this may be, everything is now finished, and she must return to her own abode, and leave her beloved Samuel behind. How would she be reminded, at the different parts of the way back without him, of what he had artlessly asked in their journey up to the temple!

What a parting was here! How affecting must it have been to leave such a child; to leave him, not for a month or a year, but for life. But she leaves him under the care, and in the service of Eli, who now feels a deep and paternal interest in him. “And the child did minister unto the Lord before Eli,” performing such offices as his tender age and powers allowed. And we are also told of his dress; “girded with a linen ephod;” a dress entirely sacerdotal, and indicative of his future destination.

Thus she leaves him; but does she forget him? “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?” Many mothers would have been continually or frequently visiting him, especially as Ramah was not very distant from Shiloh; but observe her self-denial, her firmness, her prudence. Her visit was only *annual*.

But could she ever go without going as a mother? “Moreover, his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.” Had Hannah to furnish him with articles of apparel? or was this vestment the produce of ma-

ternal fondness? In earlier times, we know, women of eminence did not deem a certain kind of manual employment beneath them. Alexander's sisters manufactured his garments; and Solomon, speaking of a virtuous princess, says, "She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff."

But does God record in his word such actions as many would deem trifling, and pass by those which the world would regard as alone worthy of notice? "His thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways." "The Lord seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh upon the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

Thus she leaves him; but is he less hers now than before? Nothing is so much our own as that which we have dedicated to God. He holds, and sanctifies, and blesses it for us; and such a sacrifice is not a *gift* but a *loan*. "Therefore I have *lent* him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be *lent* to the Lord."

And was she a loser by the deed. Was she not even recompensed? "And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The Lord give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the Lord." "And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived and bare three sons and two daughters." But, regardless of these additional olive plants around her table, what a reward had she even in Samuel himself. He was the darling of heaven and earth. "He grew in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man." He was established a prophet, and none of his words fell to the ground. He ruled and judged

Israel. He maintained a blameless reputation, and at the close of life, could thus challenge the whole nation. "I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed; whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it to you. And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand."

But what has all this to do with Hannah? Much every way. Did he early learn not to be idle? Did he readily obey those who had the rule over him? Did he cheerfully submit to restraints and privations? Did he show no unwillingness to be left behind? Had he no fear to sleep alone? Could he hear an extraordinary voice in the night without terror? Did the fear of God banish every other fear? All this proclaims *her* influence. All this *she* had early taught him. All this shows the excellency of her discipline, the wisdom of her teaching, and the influence of her example. All this, under God, was owing to Hannah. All that ennobled him praises her; and the history of the son is the eulogium of the mother.

Let me conclude with a few words of address to mothers, to children, and to husbands.

First, Let me admonish you who are mothers, to make Hannah your example. I am not afraid to intimate the great importance that belongs to your character: for however humbly it becomes you to think of yourselves *personally*, you ought highly to value yourselves *relatively*. Your maternity itself is an

amazing prerogative. What a thought that you have brought into existence a number of rational, responsible, and immortal beings. And you have not shaken them off at their birth. They demand, not only your immediate, but your persevering attention, your unremitting care. I hope I have convinced you that it is your duty to nurse your own children ; but your duty does not cease with their weaning. You are to superintend their growth, to watch over their health, to open their minds, and form their habits.

But as they are God's subjects, as well as God's creatures ; and as they have souls within them, and an eternity before them, you are to be concerned not only for their physical and outward welfare, but their moral and spiritual. You are not only to ask what shall they eat, and what shall they drink, and how shall they be clothed ? but you are to dedicate them to God, and so regard them as sacred characters, and "train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." And, as much depends upon you, so much may be accomplished by you. Who has such influence, along with so much authority ? Who has the command of so many means and opportunities of approaching and impressing the mind ?

Though Mr. Newton sinned away his early advantages, you see what benefit he derived, when awakened, from the texts and hymns his mother had fixed in his mind, in his infancy and childhood. Mr. Cecil tells us, that, in the days of his vanity, though he withstood so many pious endeavors, he never could resist his mother's tears. And Mr. Wilson, now Bishop of Calcutta, in his narrative of intercourse with Bellingham, the assassin, says he could make

him feel nothing, till he mentioned *his mother*, and then he broke into a flood of tears.

Secondly, Let me address you, my dear children, and call upon you to make Samuel your pattern, and encouragement. “When,” says Cecil, “I was a child, and a very wicked one too, the character of young Samuel came home to me, when nothing else had any hold on my mind.” And can you, my dear children, help admiring him? You see what proofs he gave of early wisdom, and how entirely he obeyed and honored his beloved mother. And will you disobey yours? Will you dishonor and distress the mother

— who bore you, and who bred,
Nursed on her knee, and at her bosom fed?

Oh! if ever you are tempted to go astray, or do amiss, hear her voice crying, “What, my son! and what, the son of my womb! and what, the son of my vows!”

And how was Samuel distinguished and honored? How well did he exemplify the fulfilment of the promise, “I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me.” You may not, like him, be called to fill a sacred office, but you will be the servants of the most high God. If long life be not granted to you, as it was to him, should you die young, this will be gain, and early death will be early glory. And should you reach fourscore years and ten, your “hoary head will be a crown of glory; being found in the way of righteousness,” and God will say, “I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth.”

It has been said that young saints often prove old demons. But nothing can be less true. Was this

the ease with Joseph ? with Obadiah ? with David ? or with Timothy ?

When we devote our youth to God
 'Tis pleasing in his eyes ;
A flower, when offered in the bud,
 Is no vain sacrificee.

'Twill save us from a thousand snares
 To mind religion young ;
Grace will preserve our following years,
 And make our virtues strong.

Oh ! may your language, therefore, be—

To thee, Almighty God, to thee,
 Our childhood we resign ;
'Twill please us to look back, and see
 That our whole lives were thine.

Thirdly, What shall I say to you who are husbands ? “Marriage is honorable in all,” and “it is not good for man to be alone.” But if you have a Hannah, be grateful, and faithful, and kind, and tender. I need not exhort you against adding a Peninnah to vex her withal. Blessed be God, we live in a land where marriage is confined to one pair, according to its original institution. But you may in other ways vex one whom, by every principle, you ought, and have sacredly promised, to cherish and comfort. “Yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.” If every wish of thine heart is not accomplished in her, remember she feels the disappointment, and is more mortified on thy account than her own. And should not thy behavior assure her that thou art “better to her than ten sons ?” Are her sprightliness, and powers, and attractions beginning to decline, whose better

days you have exulted in? Let her feel the more, that she is not alone, but "coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved." "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered."

LECTURE VIII.

ANNA, THE PROPHETESS.

And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser; she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she, coming in that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.—LUKE, ii. 36–38.

ONE of the names by which the Messiah was to be called, was the “Wonderful;” and the name was divinely appropriate. Nothing could be more marvellous than the constitution of his person, in which we see a union of divinity and humanity, of majesty and condescension, of independence and subjection, of indigence and riches. The same will apply to his history. Observe his *death*. He suffers every kind of indignity; he is bound, scourged, spit upon, buffeted, crucified between two thieves. But the sun is enveloped in darkness, and the earth shakes, and the rocks are rent, and the graves are opened, and the dead arise, the centurion exclaims, “Truly this man was the Son of God;” and the expiring thief adores him as

the Lord of all ; and prays, “Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”

Observe also his *birth*. Nothing could be more expressive of the deepest humiliation ; and adapted to scandalize all those that worship “the god of this world.” “And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.” But the season of his birth is called “the fulness of time;” an angel addresses the shepherds ; a multitude of the heavenly host descends, singing, “glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men;” a new star adorns the heavens ; and wise men come from the east, and fall down and worship him ; and he is “justified in the Spirit,” and the Holy Ghost dignifies him by inspiring two distinguished individuals to bear witness of him.

These were Simeon and Anna. Of the former it is said, “And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon ; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel ; and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. And he came by the Spirit ,into the temple ; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word ; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

which thou hast prepared before the face of all people ; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."

Nor was Simeon alone.

" And there was also one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser; she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity ; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she, coming in that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

This is all we know concerning her ; but this is not a little. The first view it leads us to take of her is her PREROGATIVE ; the second, her CONDITION IN LIFE ; the third, her DEVOUTNESS ; the fourth, her PRIVILEGE ; the fifth, her GRATITUDE ; the last, her ZEAL.

I. Her PREROGATIVE.—She was " a Prophetess." Prophecy is the expression of foreknowledge. It is distinguishable from mere conjecture, however ingenious. Conjecture *may* be followed by a correspondence of events, but the event corresponds accidentally, and is not previously certified thereby. It is also beyond the reach of reasoning from causes to effects, according to the ordinary operations of nature. It is nothing less than a miracle ; and God himself refers to it as supernatural and divine. " Who hath declared this from ancient time ? Have not I the Lord ?" " Remember the former things of old ; for I am God, and there is none else ; I am God, and

there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

As God possesses the perfect knowledge of all futurities, so he is able to communicate any portion of it he pleases to any of his creatures; and he has often done this; and our appeals to it constitute one of the most undeniable proofs of the truth of revelation.

The spirit of prophecy was, with few exceptions, confined to the Jews. Among them, it manifested itself in all its fulness and glory. From age to age they had a succession of prophets; and they were not destitute even during the whole time of the Babylonish captivity. The prophetical spirit, indeed, ceased its communications from the days of Malachi; but it was revived again about the period of the Saviour's incarnation; as we see in his forerunner, "for all held John as a prophet;" and in the case of Simeon, and of Anna of whom we are now speaking.

For this supernatural endowment was not limited to males. Miriam, and Deborah, and Huldah, and other females were honored with this ministry; and the time was now come when the language of God, by Joel, was to be accomplished. "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit."

Some may be ready to ask, if women were allowed to prophesy, why are they not permitted also to

preach? To which we answer, because we are not to argue from a miraculous age to an ordinary one; because our Lord has given us no example of this in the choice of his apostles, nor in the mission of the seventy; and because inspiration has interposed its authority, and said, "I suffer not a woman to teach" in the Church.

Though God is under no obligation to explain himself, and his decision itself should always satisfy us, yet nothing would be more easy than to show the reasons on which such a prohibition is founded. They are not to be sought for in a supposition of incapacity for the discharge of such a function, but in the order of nature, and in the line of demarcation which defines and separates the destinies and duties of each sex. Eccentrics may excite notice, but will never be admired, at least by the wise and judicious. Persons always appear to most advantage in their own proper sphere; and if females desire to be useful, they need not be disappointed; if they are not called to fill a public office, there are a thousand ways open to their talents and benevolence, in which they may serve their generation and the cause of the Gospel. "Greet Mary," says the apostle to the Romans, "who bestowed much labor on us;" and to the Philippians, "I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women who labored with me in the gospel."

II. Observe her CONDITION IN LIFE.—This was affecting and interesting. She was old and bereaved; of great age; had been early deprived of her husband; and was now a widow of about fourscore and four years.

First. She was of a great age ; and what was this ? About 84 ; and what was this to the duration of eternity ? and what was this to the years before the flood ? yea, what was it to the longevity of Jacob ? who said, in answer to the question, “ How old art thou ? ” “ The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years ; few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.”

But so reduced was the human standard, that Moses estimated it much lower : “ the days of our years are threescore years and ten ; and if, by reason of strength, they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow ; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” Anna’s age, therefore, is a kind of prodigy and wonder ; a period not often attained, but a period often earnestly desired. Yet what is life so prolonged, but a series of decays, infirmities, troubles, and losses ; and “ the years draw nigh in which we shall say, we have no pleasure in them.”

Accordingly, we remark *secondly*, that Anna had experienced affliction—affliction in the tenderest quarter, and early in life. She was now bereaved of the guide of her youth, after living only seven years in the happiness of conjugal life. Thus, she could no longer come up out of the wilderness leaning on her beloved, but was doomed to travel the rest of the long journey of life, alone !

The Jews, anciently, in their weddings, observed a very striking usage. They dashed a glass upon the floor, to show by its fraction the brittleness of the connection itself. And funeral solemnities have

often been soon found to follow marriage rites. It becomes you, therefore, to "rejoice with trembling," even in the day of your espousals, and the day of the gladness of your heart. Be thankful, ye whose relative comforts are yet spared; ye who, year after year, behold your dear connections still around you. But O, hold them with a loose hand. Remember that "all, all on earth is shadow;" and will you set your heart on that which is not? "This, I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."

Anna probably began life under every pleasing prospect, but her hopes were soon torn up by the roots: yet,

Thirdly, We observe that she did not alter her condition again, but lived the remainder of her days in the state the Providence of God had been pleased to place her in; and her very long widowhood is not mentioned to her disparagement. Unquestionably there is nothing sinful in a second marriage. The Apostle himself has determined this. "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord."

Whatever differences there were among the first Christians, they all agreed equally to remember the poor; and, among these, widows were peculiarly regarded; and their condition required it. But as every

institution must have some laws and limits, hear the apostolical admonition and decision—" Honor widows that are widows indeed. Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man ; well reported of for good works ; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work."

No one spoke more in praise of marriage than Paul. He pronounced it "honorable in all;" and branded, as among the "doctrines of devils," the "forbidding to marry;" yet he remained single himself; and there were seasons and circumstances which led him to say, "I would that all men were even as I myself." "I say, therefore, to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I."

But we must learn from the Scripture to distinguish things that differ; and the Apostle reminds us that what is lawful may not be expedient, and that what is justifiable may not be praiseworthy. Upon what principle, or for what reason, does he speak upon the subject before us? "I would have you without carefulness." "The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit ; but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband." Well, then, says Anna, let me continue as I am.

III. HER DEVOUTNESS.—“She departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.”

This may be viewed two ways, in addition to her prerogative as a prophetess. *First*, You will observe, that the gift of prophecy was always distinguishable from the spirit of holiness. It was sometimes possessed by those who, though God’s instruments, were not his subjects; witness Balaam, and Caiphas, and the declaration of the Judge of all, “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” But Anna was sanctified as well as inspired.

Secondly, It may also be viewed in reference to her condition in life; for though real religion does not depend upon outward circumstances; a life of bereavement, privation, and trial, is much more friendly to its support and increase than a course of invariable prosperity. “Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.”

But, it may be asked, how are we to understand the representation of her piety? It cannot be supposed that her “not departing from the temple,” means her residence in it continually; or that her “serving God with fastings and prayers night and day,” is to be taken according to the letter; for then she could have had neither sleep nor food; but that her worship was regular and invariable, and that she took every opportunity of attending the solemnities of devotion.

It may also include not only the frequency of her actual engagements, but the state and frame of her mind. Her spirit there found itself at home, according to the desire of David, "that I may *dwell* in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."

The circumstances of individuals are very various. Few persons, comparatively, have leisure for such devotions as this good woman. Many females in common life have numerous cares, and often find it difficult to get to the house of God twice on the Lord's day, or once in the week. They would always be gladly present when its open doors invite, but prudence forbids, even Christian duty forbids. Let such remember the Saviour's commendation of Mary, "she hath done what she could." Let them remember that "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not;" and that they may serve him without wiping their hands out of the worldly business in which they are engaged; and that "whether they eat, or drink, or whatsoever they do," they may "do all to the glory of God."

But where leisure and means are afforded, let them be valued and improved; and whatever our engagements may be, let the care of the soul be our chief concern, and let the whole of life be a scene of dedication to God. If we do not literally fast, let us exercise temperance, and "take heed, lest at any time our hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life; and so that day come upon us unawares." If we are not always upon our knees, let us live in the spirit of devotion; and "in everything

by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known unto God ; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

IV. HER PRIVILEGE.—It was the sight of the Messiah. It was the same with good Simeon's, and was enjoyed eotemporaneously, "She came in at the same instant." What an assemblage was she now intermingled with. How pleasing must it have been to see Simeon, and Joseph, and Mary his mother, "blessed above women." But here was one far above all these ; it was "the consolation of Israel," it was "the desire of all nations," it was "the holy child Jesus."

"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick ; but when the desire cometh it is a tree of life." And how richly is Anna gratified and recompensed for her long waiting and expectation. But "to him that hath, shall be given ; and he shall have more abundantly." "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord : his going forth is prepared as the morning ; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the former and latter rain unto the earth.

But where did she find him ? When she "came into the Temple." Ah ! had she not been there at this season, what a loss would she have sustained ! From whence, let us learn that if we would see Jesus, we should repair to his house, and obey like Anna the call of the Spirit. Thomas, being absent from the assembly at Jerusalem, when Jesus appeared and showed them his hands and his feet, missed the sight of the

Saviour, and remained a whole week in the anxieties of doubts and fears.

V. HER GRATITUDE.—“She likewise gave thanks unto the Lord.” And surely there was enough to call forth her praise, not so much as to the external and even miraculous part of the scene, as to the magnitude and importance of the event. “For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it?”—For now “the counsel of peace” is laid open; now the prophecies are verified; now the promises are fulfilled; and the hopes of believers from the beginning of time are realized.—And she knew that the blessing did not respect herself and her connections only, but the whole human race; that “in him all the families of the earth would be blessed;” that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

And should not we feel equal reasons and excitements to gratitude and praise? Though we have not seen him with our bodily eyes, “we know that the Son of God is come;” we know that he “is come to seek and to save that which was lost;” we know that he is come not only that we “might have life” but “have it more abundantly;” we know that “in him all fulness dwells:”—and shall we not exclaim, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift;” and “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings

in heavenly places in Christ"? Shall we bless him "for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life;" and not much more for his "inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace and for the hope of glory"? And shall we not "show forth his praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to his service, and by walking before him in holiness and righteousness all our days"? "Though," says Henry, "thanksgiving is good, thanks-living is better." Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God."

VI. Her ZEAL.—"She spake of him to all that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." And who were these? They consisted of two classes, (for all were expectants.) But, 1st, some were carnal expectants; they looked for a temporal and worldly deliverer, who should save them from the Romans, and set them in the high places of the earth. In speaking of him to these, she would endeavor to rectify their mistake, and proclaim him the King of glory, owning a kingdom not of this world.

2^{dly}, Others, though few, were spiritual expectants, who longed to be saved from their sins, being "delivered from the bondage of corruption," and brought "into the glorious liberty of the children of God." These she would congratulate and encourage; "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

To all these she spake of him at present, and also, doubtless, whenever she had an opportunity, afterwards, and by all the means of communication in her power. In this her character gains, rather than loses, by a comparison with her illustrious fellow-witness. Simeon seems, by his vision, to have had his fill of life, and only longs for his departure; but Anna thinks nothing of dying, but is only concerned to improve her few remaining days, making known that which she had seen and heard, that others might have fellowship with her.

And herein she becomes your example. You who have found a Redeemer yourselves, should make him known, and recommend him to others. You should not only seize, but seek after opportunities; and surely you can easily find them; for where are your children, your relations, your friends, and your neighbours?

Then I will tell to sinners round,
What a dear Saviour I have found;
I'll point to his atoning blood,
And say, behold the way to God.

And if this be your determination, remember three things. 1st. That a certain consistency of character and conduct will be expected from you. If you neglect this, it will be better for you to hold your peace; for inconsistency is worse than omission. Though the people of the world are strangers to your experience, they are, commonly, tolerable judges of your deportment. They know what kind of conduct becomes the profession you make, and will not fail to ask, "What do ye more than others?" Many

things which they tolerate in others, they will be sure to censure and condemn in you. The whole complexion of a negro is less noticed than a single stain in the features of a white countenance.

But if while you speak of the things of the Saviour, you hold forth the word of life by your temper and behavior, and exemplify what you recommend; remember, *2dly*, The Lord may bless your simple testimony and make you the means of bringing some soul to the Lord Jesus; as Andrew did Peter; and Philip, Nathanael; and the woman of Samaria, her neighbors. And,

3dly, Remember that "he who winneth souls is wise;" that "verily there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth;" and that no benefactor will bear a moment's comparison with him who is the blessed instrument to achieve it. The success is infinite, and ought to be its own reward. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he who converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

The subject appeals to all, but especially to those who are advanced in years. Simeon is commonly *supposed* to be aged, but we *know* that Anna was, and her head was not only hoary, but "found in the way of righteousness." "Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom." Surely you, whose lips are soon to be silent in the grave, ought to be thankful, and to speak well of his name, who has redeemed your lives from all adversity, and is so soon to "receive

you to himself, that where he is, there you shall be also." " And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

LECTURE IX.

THE WOMAN OF CANAAN.

Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered, and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilst. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

MATTHEW, xv. 21-28.

Let us consider this petitioner five ways:—

- I. AS AN UNLIKELY SUPPLIANT.
- II. AS AN AFFLICTED SUPPLIANT.
- III. AS AN UNFORTUNATE SUPPLIANT.
- IV. AS A SUCCESSFUL SUPPLIANT.
- V. AS AN INSTRUCTIVE SUPPLIANT.

“Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.”—Amen.

I. View her as an UNLIKELY SUPPLIANT.

For who was this woman? She was not a Jew,

but a Gentile ; an “ alien from the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” She was descended from one of the wretched nations whom God had doomed to destruction, and whose remnants were to be as thorns and goads in the sides of the people who had criminally suffered them to escape. They were now serving idols, and were in darkness and the region of the shadow of death.

But, to the disgrace of the Jews, who, when the Messiah “came to his own, his own received him not;” when *they* despised and rejected him, this poor Canaanite is found at his feet, adoring him and supplicating mercy and help.

On a similar occasion, when a Roman centurion addressed him on behalf of his servant, dispensing with his bodily presence as not necessary to the cure, and trusting simply in the efficacy of his word, Jesus “said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”

Thus, “many that are first shall be last, and the last first.” While the hoary head, though often reprobated, has gone on still in his trespasses ; children in the temple have cried, “Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord ;” and “out of the mouth of babes and sucklings he perfecteth praise.” While some, whose amiable and moral character seemed to bring them near the kingdom of Heaven, have failed of the grace of God, publicans and harlots have obtained mercy. While those who have had distinguished religious privileges, have neglected the great salvation, persons destitute of the means of grace have felt after the Lord and

found Him. The offspring of godly parents have sinned away all the advantages of a pious education ; but the sons of the stranger have joined themselves to the Lord, and had “a name and a place in his house better than that of sons and of daughters.” “In that hour, Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father ; for so it seemed good in thy sight.” “Ye see your calling, brethren,” says Paul, “ how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called ; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise ; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are : that no flesh should glory in his presence.”

II. She was an AFFLICTED SUPPLIANT.

“Afflictions,” says an old writer, “are like files ; they serve to give an edge to our devotions : or they resemble the counsellors of Benhadad, they send us, with ‘ropes upon our necks,’ to the merciful King of Israel.”

In prosperity, God invites us to himself by a profusion of favors ; in adversity, he leaves us no choice. Then, we have no other arm to lean upon, no other helper to implore. Then, turning away from creatures, we look up and say, “Now, Lord, what wait I for ? my hope is in thee.”

What brought back the prodigal to his father's house?—famine. What led Manasseh to seek the Lord God of his father?—degradation, imprisonment, and fetters. What said David himself?—"It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes. Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word." What was it that brought this woman to Christ?—But for her affliction she would have remained at home, and made no inquiries after him. This was the case with her neighbors. It is the case with thousands now. "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God."

But what was her affliction?—It was not personal, but relative; yet who need be told that relative sufferings often even exceed personal? As the connections of life yield many springs of pleasure, so they also open many sources of pain. They are our possessions, that render us susceptible of losses; and according to our affections are our keenest anxieties, and fears, and sorrows. O how strong is *parental* affection! How much more so is *maternal*! To a mother, a child is endeared by feelings peculiar to herself; by a law of nature and providence, she and her offspring are one.

What was her daughter's condition? However the doctrine of what is called "*possession*" be explained, the expression here employed, "grievously vexed with a devil," can signify nothing less than a state of dreadful calamity and fearful jeopardy. Who, therefore, can imagine this poor mother's affliction, to see her own beloved daughter in a state of suffering worse than death? What wonder she hastens to the Saviour, and pleads for her daughter's deliverance as a mercy

to herself. "Have mercy on *me*, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."

III. She was an IMPORTUNATE SUPPLIANT.

To judge of this, it is only necessary to observe the various difficulties and repulses she had to encounter in her application.

The first of these arose from our Lord's silence. "He answered her not a word." How little did this accord with the reports she had heard of him, and what a shock must it have been to the hope she had founded on them! It seemed to imply nothing less than perfect unconcern and indifference.

The second arose from the language of the disciples. "His disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us." We can hardly suppose the disciples were so unkind as to wish her to be dismissed without relief. But it is obvious they were too little alive to the ease of the agonized pleader, and too much concerned for their own ease; or they were carried away by a mistaken regard for the Saviour's freedom from annoyance. "How long, O Lord, shall we be assailed, and thou interrupted and troubled, by this loud and ceaseless clamor?" It is well, in some of our concerns, that we have not to deal with men, even with good men. How liable are they to mistake. How impatient are they, often, in their feelings. How severely do they treat our infirmities. How little can they teach, in our doubts and fears, as we are able to bear it. How rarely does kindness adorn their carriage, or tenderness grace their charity.

"Let me fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great ; and let me not fall into the hand of man," for "the best of men are but men at the best."

In answering the disciples, the woman must have heard him ; and this was the third discouragement. "He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This repulse seemed the entire exclusion of her suit. The case was this. Though the Messiah was to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of his people Israel, his time was not yet come. The gospel, as a dispensation, did not properly commence till the Saviour's death. Then the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom ; then the middle wall of partition betwixt Jews and Gentiles was thrown down, and both were made one ; then the commission ran, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." But before this, when he sent forth the twelve apostles, and the seventy disciples, he had said, "Go not in the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not." As to his personal labors, he was the minister of the circumcision, and the Jews only were the immediate objects of his mission ; and as this Canaanite was not one of them, he seems to intimate that she was not within the bounds of his office.

We are afraid the disciples were rather pleased with this answer, as it fell in with their Jewish prejudices. They, therefore, said nothing more ; and probably thought *she* would not. She, however, was too much interested, and too much in earnest, to cease crying. "Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me."

This drew forth the last and greatest discouragement. "He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." Here was not only refusal, but reflection; not only exclusion, but insult. Dog was a common name of odium and reproach. It was the term by which the Jews, to whom pertained the adoption, and who considered themselves as the children of the covenant, designated the poor Gentiles, as outcasts, contemptible, and unclean. Nothing could so well express the vileness of a sacrifice as "cutting off a dog's neck;" and Hazael could think of no epithet to express his abhorrence of his foretold atrocity so forcible as this, "What! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?"

But was this the language of the Son of God? Are these some of the gracious words which were said to proceed out of his mouth? How many, upon hearing this, would have returned in bitter sadness, and have broken forth in such exclamations as these:—"O that I had stayed at home, and never exposed myself to such merciless treatment! Was I not afflicted enough before, in the pitiable condition of my poor child? I am a woman, a mother, a widowed mother; and if there be nothing worthy in the sufferer, there is always something sacred in grief. If I am not one of the favored nation, I am one of the human race. If I cannot excite pity, it is hard to be treated with scorn and contempt."

But nothing of all this is sufficient to turn her away. Yea, she even takes advantage from her trial. She turns objection into argument, and derives hope from discouragement itself. How ingenious is her

reply—"Thou callest me a dog. I deserve to bear the name, and only plead for a dog's treatment. I aspire not to sit at thy table, but forbid me not to creep under it. If the children are sated and wasteful, let me gather up what they neither want nor desire, and which will soon be swept away. I shall rob no one; and what I beg is no more to thy bounty than a crumb to a royal feast. But O, *what will it be to me?* Speak but the word, and my daughter shall be healed."

IV. She was a SUCCESSFUL SUPPLIANT.

The Saviour can withstand and withhold no longer. He complies with her application; yea, and does more. "Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilst. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

And what *was* this faith of hers? She could hardly have believed in his divinity. This, at present, was only revealed obscurely, and derived much from inference; but she believed in his Messiahship; she believed that he was the Son of David; she believed the truth of his miracles of which she had heard; she believed in his ability to heal her daughter; and she also believed that he was inclined to answer her, notwithstanding his apparent inattention and severity. Some who came to him in the days of his flesh questioned his power, and others his willingness to succor them; but this woman, without anything particularly to rely upon, and under the most trying discouragements, hoped and trusted in both.

And this shows us wherein the greatness of faith so much consists. It is in a readiness to believe; it is to rely on God's promises, when his doings seem rather to oppose than to confirm them; it is to receive the kingdom of God as a little child receives the declarations of his father; it is, however pressed by difficulties, never to ask "How can these things be?"

We see this illustrated in Abraham, the father of the faithful, and the grand example of faith. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed: and he went out, not knowing whither he went." "Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be." "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform."

All faith is precious, precious even when it is only as a grain of mustard seed; but great faith is to be highly estimated, and sought after. You will continually need it, especially in every dark day, and under every frowning dispensation. It "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It can read God's short-hand. It can see a smiling face, behind a frowning providence. It can understand all mysteries. It can remove mountains. "All things are possible to him that believeth."

Faith, mighty faith the promise sees,
Relies on that alone;
Laughs at impossibilities,
And says, It shall be done.

No wonder, therefore, the Saviour admires and extols the faith of this woman for its greatness, and ascribes everything to its influence. Other qualities were discernible in her, but they all grew out of her faith; faith was the root, all besides was only and wholly produce. This was the principle of her humility, of her diligence, of her zeal, of her perseverance. Nothing else could have made her steadfast and immovable, and determined not to let him go unless he blessed her.

And as the greatness of her faith appeared before the Saviour had pronounced in her favor, so it showed itself after her receiving the promise. She does not desire him to go with her to her home, as the nobleman did; she does not deem his presence necessary to his agency; his word was enough, and she asks for nothing to confirm it. She goes home, therefore, full of expectation. And was she disappointed? She found her dearest wish accomplished; and her house was filled with the voice of rejoicing and salvation. O what endearings and embracings were there! O what adorations of her deliverer and benefactor! O what inquiries, what they should render, and how show forth his praise?—For “her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”

V. She was an INSTRUCTIVE SUPPLIANT.

There are two lessons, in particular, which she teaches us.

1st, That in our applications to Christ we may be sorely exercised. And, perhaps, I am addressing some, whose experience, in no small degree, re-

sembles the case we have reviewed. Did the Saviour answer her not a word? And you are saying, "I had heard much of his name, and I felt my need of him. At length, I went and fell at his feet; and there I am now. I wait for him more than they that watch for the morning, but I see no break of day. I pray, but I am not heard. I cry, Lord, 'Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. Show me a token for good;' and one word of his would scatter all my fears. But he shutteth out my prayers."

Did the disciples beseech him, saying, "send her away, for she crieth after us"? And, perhaps, you are discouraged by those who ought to comfort you. They seem wanting in sympathy and tenderness. They are prepossessed against you, as selfish in your motives, or insincere in your pretensions. They puzzle you with hard doctrines. They question you in a way that cuts you to the heart; and they make you suspect that the root of the matter is not in you, by boasting in your presence their own assurances and raptures.

Did he say, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"? And, perhaps, you are saying, "I see him receiving and welcoming others to the blessings of his great salvation, but I find I have no title to any of his favors. I have neither part nor lot in the matter."

Did he say, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs"? And, perhaps, you are saying, "He seems not only to deny my claim, but to aggravate my distress." He pronounces upon me the threatenings of the law, rouses the accusations of conscience, and increases the sense of my

guilt and vileness. I fear that my case is hopeless, and that I shall have my portion at the last, with hypocrites and unbelievers, "for without are dogs."

And, as in the case before us, you may also have external afflictions, as well as inward griefs; and "fightings without" may accompany "fears within;" and you may write "all these things are against me," and say, "my wound is incurable." Such an experience is greatly trying, yet it should not discourage you. It is not singular. Many have trodden the same path, and have known the same heart's bitterness. It is, therefore, a token for good; and should be viewed as a waymark, instead of a stumbling-stone.

And see the men of the world, who wish to rise to power, wealth, or honor. Do they meet with no difficulties and obstacles in their course? Do they not rise early and sit up late, and often eat the bread of sorrow? What crosses do they take up? To what toils do they submit? What repulses, what mortifications, do they endure? And for what? They run for a corruptible crown, but you for an incorruptible. They also are never sure of success, but often labor in vain, and are ashamed of their hope; but you run not uncertainly; you fight not as one that beateth the air; you may sow in tears, but you are sure to reap in joy. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

2dly, She teaches us that sincere and earnest prayer, however tried, shall at last succeed. These rebukes and delays are not refusals. The Lord waits that he may be gracious, and "blessed are all they

that wait upon him." There is an order in the operations of Providence and Grace, and everything is beautiful in his time. The Lord has reasons for all his dealings with his people. He regards the honor of his own name, which never appears so glorious as amidst creature despondencies. He regards also their own welfare. He hereby exercises their faith and patience; quickens their holy longings; endears the blessing; and makes it, when it comes, a tree of life. Do not, therefore, in the meanwhile say, there is no hope. If he has drawn you to his feet, he will not suffer you to perish there, or drive you away unsupplied. Poor trembling soul, thy prayer *is heard*, though not yet answered! But it will be answered, it must be answered in due time; for he "never said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain." Read the gospel, and see if he ever refused a suppliant that cried to him for mercy and help. The case of this woman looks, at first, the most disconsolate of any; yet we soon "see the end of the Lord," and find that he "is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." View the picture again and again; and, if you can see a resemblance of yourself, "wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord."

Let me conclude, therefore, by admonishing you to follow this interesting example. For why is it recorded; and recorded with such minuteness? Is it only to amuse the mind, or gratify curiosity, or draw forth admiration? No! but to excite and encourage you to judge properly of the Saviour, and induce you also to look to him in every time of need.

In such a case as this, he comes forth and shows himself as the gracious and almighty friend and helper of man ; and if the display does not lead you to apply to him, it fails of its design ; for “these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that, believing, ye might have life through his name.” “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.”

Did this poor woman so readily apply to him ? and will you constrain him to say, “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life”? Say not, “O ! were he on earth, I would instantly repair to him ; but he is no more in the world, that I might commit my case to him.” For though he is no more in the world visibly and corporeally, he is here really and spiritually ; and if you seek him, he will be found of you, and say, “Here I am.”

Some say, “But I know not how to pray.” What is prayer but the desire of the soul to the Lord, however expressed ? What was the prayer of this petitioner ? Son of David, have mercy upon me ! Lord, help me ! Refuse me not a crumb of thy children’s bread. Yet this prevailed ; and he said, “Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.”

Again you say, “But will he accept me now ? I have no other resource, and I go to him, driven by necessity rather than choice.” Has he not said, “Him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out ;” and “Whoso asketh receiveth, and whoso seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened” ?

Go, therefore, to him, and you will find him both able and willing "to save to the uttermost." There is in him everything you need; righteousness to justify, grace to sanctify, strength to support, consolation to comfort. In him all fulness dwells, and from his fulness you may "all receive, and grace for grace." Seek him then in all your exigencies, and look nowhere else for succor. He who opened the eyes of the blind can open the eyes of your understanding. He who calmed the raging deep can tranquillize a troubled conscience; for he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." Are you in affliction? Go to him who says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee." Are you in temporal straits? Call upon him who says, "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Are you bereaved? Think of him who says, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in me." Have you reached the evil days in which you say you have no pleasure in them? Look to him who says, "Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." Have you connections? Apply to him for them as well as for yourselves. The Throne of grace is a delightful resource of benevolence, and a mighty one too. You are unable to relieve a beloved friend or relative; but you have a helper on high; and prayer has power with God, and can prevail. Are you parents? Sin is worse than any bodily disease. Have you a child living in wickedness? Do not consider him as abandoned; continue in the use of means, in dependence upon his Holy Spirit. Go

to him who knows no difficulties, and with whom all things are possible. "Bring him unto me."

What shall we say to those who care for none of these things; who never pray for others or themselves? This will not be always the case; nor will it be the case long. A time is hastening on, when you will call, but he will not answer; you may seek him early, but shall not find him. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."

Sinner, hear the Saviour's call,
 He now is passing by;
 He has seen thy grievous fall,
 And heard thy mournful cry.
 He has pardons to impart,
 Grace to save thee from thy fears;
 See the love that fills his heart,
 And wipe away thy tears.

Why art thou afraid to come,
 And tell him all thy case?
 He will not pronounce thy doom,
 Nor frown thee from his face.
 Wilt thou fear Emmanuel;
 Wilt thou fear the Lamb of God;
 Who, to save thy soul from hell,
 Has shed his precious blood?

Though his majesty be great,
 His mercy is no less;
 Though he thy transgressions hate,
 He feels for thy distress.
 By himself the Lord hath sworn,
 He delights not in thy pain;
 But invites thee to return,
 And grace and glory gain.

Raise thy downcast eyes and see
What throngs his throne surround !
These, though sinners once like thee,
Have full salvation found.
Yield not then to unbelief,
While he says "There yet is room ;"
Though of sinners thou art chief,
Since Jesus calls thee,—Come.

LECTURE X.

THE WOMAN WHO ANOINTED THE SAVIOUR'S HEAD.

Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.—MARK, xiv. 9.

THE narrative which is to engage our present attention, proves, in some respects, a remarkable contrast with the relation which passed under our review in the preceding Lecture. There we saw a woman of Canaan, a heathen, and probably a widow, afflicted with a daughter “grievously vexed with a devil;” who, hearing of the fame of Jesus, came and cried to him for help; but meeting with treatment more than enough to have driven back any ordinary applicant, yet with persevering importunity pressed through every discouragement, and obtained at last the petition she asked of him.

But the woman who now appears before us is not driven to the Saviour by distress: she comes not as a beggar but as a follower, not as a suppliant but

as a friend. She knows him, and feels herself already deeply indebted to him ; and is come, not to discharge her obligation, (this she knew to be impossible,) but to express the gratitude she owed him, and the love she bore him.

" And being in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, therè came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious ; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made ? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. And Jesus said, Let her alone ; why trouble ye her ? she hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good : but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could : she is come beforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

Observe, THE PLACE : THE ACTION : THE CENSURE :
THE VINDICATION : and THE MEMORIAL.

I. Observe THE PLACE.

The scene named is Bethany. Bethany was a small village in the neighborhood of Jerusalem ; a

place which, we presume, we seldom hear of without thinking of a family dear to the Saviour; for "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus;" and recalling a very interesting and instructive event. "Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Religion is a benevolent, social, and diffusive thing. When Christians are endeavoring to do good unto all men, they are often reproached as intruders, and desired to keep their religion to themselves. But this is enjoining upon them an impossibility; and "if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." They "cannot but speak the things which they have seen and heard." This blessed family, therefore, being acquainted with the Saviour themselves, and frequently favored with his visits, it would appear, introduced him to their neighbors; for we here find him in another house in the same village; "the house of Simon the leper." This does not mean that he was a leper now, for then he would have been under legal restraint, and none could have had intercourse with him; but the mean-

ing is that he *had been* a leper, and well known as such ; and it is more than probable that our Saviour had healed him of this dreadful and incurable disorder ; and, therefore, as a token of his regard and gratitude, he was desirous of entertaining his deliverer and benefactor, and had invited others to meet him, hoping that they would derive benefit from his presence, as he himself had done.

Our Lord complied with the invitation, and gave the company the cheerful though not the intemperate meeting. For though nothing could be viler or more false than the insinuation of his enemies, that he was a glutton and a wine-biber, yet he partook of the good things of Providence, in a way which distinguished him from his forerunner, who was reserved, and austere, and “came neither eating nor drinking, and they said, He hath a devil.”

He would also show by his example that he did not wish his disciples to be mopish and superstitious, enduring corporeal inflictions, and refusing the common supplies and recreations of life. “Touch not; taste not; handle not. Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will, worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh.”

II. Observe THE ACTION.

“There came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.”

The usages of mankind differ exceedingly, accord-

ing to climate, and the degrees of knowledge and civilization. Thus in a hot country, and where persons wore sandals, the washing of the feet, especially when coming in from a journey, was deemed a great refreshment, and was used as a common gratification. In Judea, unction was a delicious indulgence, and was often used as a token of honor, as well as a luxury. "Ointment and perfume," says Solomon, "rejoice the heart." David, to signify the munificence of the divine goodness towards him, says, "Thou anointest my head with oil :" and he compares the excellency of brotherly love to "the precious ointment upon the head of Aaron, that ran down to the skirts of his garments :" and his son Solomon, to excite constant cheerfulness and dignity, says, "Let thy head lack no ointment."

We do not feel the force of these allusions as the Easterns did ; yet who has not been charmed with the fragrance of a rose, or a lily ? Who, after rain, has not been regaled with the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed ? Who has read only of "incense-breathing morn" ?

How obviously does the beneficence of God appear in "giving us all things richly to enjoy ;" in providing not for our sustenance only, but for our indulgence ; and in adapting the various productions of nature to the delight, not less than the use, of all our senses. What softness and smoothness for the touch ! what colors for the eye ! what melodies for the ear ! what relishes for the taste ! what odors for the smell ! And all this he has provided for guilty creatures, who have renounced his service, and declared themselves

his enemies by wicked works; and all this he continues to afford to these very beings, though they are daily and hourly offending him! And if it be thus with a world lying in wickedness, what will it be with the creation of “new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness”?

But to return—“She brake the box and poured the ointment upon his head.” The sacrifice she made was great, and would have been difficult, but for the state of her mind. In making it, she had at once to resist the love of money, and the influence of pride and vanity. She had, doubtless, purchased this very costly perfume to expend upon herself and her charms. A female who neglects her person is a slattern, and deservedly despised; but her person is an article a woman rarely overlooks. She seems intuitively, as well as from observation, conscious that, as to thousands, she can make more impression by exterior appearance than by either intelligence or pious worth. This she early learns; and when does she forget? “Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?”

But this woman forgets all thoughts of herself in thoughts of the Saviour. Her knowledge of him whom her soul loved had reduced the value of every other attraction; and she could realize the language of the poet, and say,

As by the light of opening day,
The stars are all concealed,
So earthly pleasures fade away,
When Jesus is revealed.

Gairard J. Harvey

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LECTURE X.

Its pleasures now no longer please
No more content afford ;
Far from my heart be joys like these,
Now I have seen the Lord.

III. Observe THE CENSURE.

"And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made ? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her."

There is a disposition observable in some, to view unfavorably everything that falls under their notice. They seek to gain consequence, by always differing from others in judgment ; and try to depreciate what they allow to be worthy in itself, by hinting at some mistake or imperfection in the performance. You are too lofty, or too low in your manners ; you are too frugal, or too profuse in your expenditure ; you are too taciturn, or too free in your speech ; and so of the rest.

Now, guard against this tendency. Nothing will conduce more to your uncomfortableness than living in the neighborhood of ill-nature, and being familiar with discontent. The disposition grows with indulgence ; and is low and base in itself ; and if any should be ready to pride themselves on skill and facility in the science, let them remember that the acquisition is cheap and easy : a child can deface and destroy : dulness and stupidity, which seldom lack inclination or means, can cavil and find fault ; and everything can furnish ignorance, prejudice, and envy, with a handle of reproach.

Why was not such a thing done? Because, perhaps, it was impossible: because, perhaps, it was improper: because, perhaps, it would have done evil rather than good. You censure; but if you knew all, you would commend what you now condemn. You censure; but you would have acted in the same manner, had you been placed in the same condition.

We cannot judge properly of any course of action, or any instance of conduct, unless we take into account its circumstances, its bearings, its reasons, its motives; and how rarely can we do this with fairness; and hence we are forbidden to do it at all. "Judge not, that ye be not judged." "Let us not therefore judge one another any more." But let us rather invite into our bosoms the charity which "thinketh no evil; believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

IV. Observe THE VINDICATION.

From the cavils of the murmurers the Saviour justifies the deed. "And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she has come beforehand to anoint my body to the burying."

First; It is obvious she felt the reflection. This is more than implied in our Saviour's rebuke, "why trouble ye her?" She probably turned aside and wept. Though it ought to be a light thing with us

to be judged of men's judgment, it cannot but be painful to be misunderstood and misrepresented (especially when conscious of well-doing) by real friends and good men, whose good opinion and favor we value.

Yet, *Secondly*; She does not complain of ill usage; she makes no angry or hasty reply; she says nothing, but leaves her case to plead for itself. How unlike this, is the disposition of many. How irritable, how impatient are they. They cannot trust God for a moment with their reputation. Hence they are instantly provoked to defend themselves, and angrily retaliate, and thus take the matter out of *his* hand, who, if they suffer innocently and righteously, has said, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." "To do good, and to bear evil," says Latimer, "is inscribed on the crown for which we run:" and we know who has "suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."

And well might this good woman be silent, for *he* was near who justified; and,

Thirdly; We see that he approved of her action, and called what they upbraided, "a good work;" that is, becoming, reasonable, righteous; "she hath wrought a good work on me."

It was opportune, and seasonable; and everything is beautiful in its time. He was soon to be

absent from them, and beyond the reach of their attention ; he was within a few days of his death ; and this would not be the case with the poor ; the poor would remain to receive acts of kindness. While some opportunities are frequently returning, others occur but once ; and where this is the case our duty is pressing and immediate. Upon this principle Solomon says, “ Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”

It was significant. As if he had said, “ If I were dead you would be willing to expend more than this sum upon my corpse, and you would not say, what good can it do to his senseless remains ? It should be applied to the living and not to the dead. You would not ask, why is this waste *then?* and why call you it so *now?* There is more in this action than you are aware of; an intimation, a prefiguration of my death ; for I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand, and she is beginning to signalize my burial.”

Now, it is not certain or probable that she intended emblematically to solemnize this event; but we here have an instance of the overruling providence of God, who, in an enterprise or action, has frequently in view an end, far beyond the knowledge and design of the agent.

We see also how apprized our Lord was of the certainty and approach of his death, and how much he thought of it, and alluded to it.

He also owns the *degree* of her endeavor ; for,

though it was not meritorious or extraordinary, “she had done *what she could.*” Many duties and services might be much more perfect than they are; but their deficiencies are overlooked and forgiven, because of the want of better light and ampler means; and because of the number of difficulties and hinderances in the condition of those, who “would do good,” but “evil is present with them; and how to perform that which is good they find not.” The Lord regards the heart, and judges of our performance by our ability; and “if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.”

Hence, you need not envy those who are placed in higher stations, or who command richer resources than yourselves. You may do as much, comparatively, as they; yea, you may do much more, in the judgment of him, who “called unto him his disciples, and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they who have cast into the treasury; for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.”

Honor and shame from no condition rise;
Act well your part, there all the honor lies.

Fill up your sphere properly, however humble and contracted; and use diligently your means and opportunities, however few and limited. Do what you *can*, and “whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus;” and he will not only accept, but reward you graciously; and you shall one

day hear him say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

V. Observe THE MEMORIAL.

For he does not deem it enough to justify her conduct. He approves of it. He commends it. He applauds it. He immortalizes it. “Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.”

This declaration has been amply fulfilled. Her action was recorded in the sacred history, as soon as it was published. There it has been preserved ever since. It has been continually perused by readers, and expounded by preachers. We are at this very moment complying with the Saviour’s design, and nations yet unborn shall arise and call her blessed.

Here, therefore, we may remark two things:—

First, We have here an instance and evidence of the wisdom and truth of the Lord Jesus. He is “the Amen, the faithful and true witness.” All his decisions, all his announcements, all his promises may be relied on with more firmness than we can rely upon the continuance of heaven and earth; for “heaven and earth may pass away, but his word shall not pass away.”

Secondly, We here see the judgment of our Lord and Saviour, as to what *he* deems truly excellent, and most worthy of renown and perpetuity:—not the

adventures of merchants ; not the intrigues of politicians ; not the exploits of heroes ; not the pomp of kings ; not the prodigies of genius ; not the discoveries of philosophers. “ After all these things do the Gentiles seek.” These are the wonders which the men of the world admire. To these they consecrate their eulogies ; and of these they endeavor to eternize the memorials in statues of marble and brass. They have little regard for humbleness of mind, for purity of heart, for heavenly tempers, for all the fruits of the Spirit, which are “ love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” But you know who, in answer to the question of the disciples, “ Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven ? ” “ called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” And you know where you read, “ The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy ;” and “ The prayer of the upright is his delight ;” and “ To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” So true is it that “ his thoughts are not our thoughts ;” and that “ he seeth not as man seeth.”

How many things done in the house of Simon the leper, and in Bethany, and in Judea, and in Greece and Rome, have perished like a dream ; while “ Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.”

In conclusion, let us, *First*, remark with pleasure, that though the Lord Jesus had always been “despised and rejected of men,” this has never been invariably and universally the case. To some he has ever been “precious,” “the chief among ten thousand,” the “altogether lovely.” “Abraham saw his day and was glad.” Moses “esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.” David “sang of his righteousness, and talked of his salvation all the day long.” Even in the days of his flesh, and under all his humiliations, there were some who “saw his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;” and Simeon, and Anna, and all those “who looked for redemption in Jerusalem,” embraced him with a rapture expressive of this language, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

And how has the number of his admirers increased since? and how is it increasing now? and what will it be when “He shall be great to the ends of the earth; and all nations shall call him blessed”? “Blessed be his glorious name forever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.”

Remark, *Secondly*, Where love to Christ is the principle, it will evince itself by its influence and effects. It cannot be hid, it cannot lie dormant, it cannot be inoperative. It will lead you to ask, “What wilt thou have me to do?” It will induce you not only to think, but to speak well of his name; not only to seize, but to seek after opportunities of doing him honor;

and make you willing not only to serve him, but to sacrifice for him and to say,

All that I am, and all I have,
Shall be forever thine;
Whate'er my duty bids me give,
My cheerful hands resign.

Away then with mere words and professions. "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." The question is, What are we doing? What are we giving up? Wherein are we denying ourselves for his sake? For this is his decision,—"and the Scripture cannot be broken"—"He that forsaketh not all that he hath cannot be my disciple."

Say not, he is no longer personally within our reach. There are objects in which you may show your regard to him, by the proofs of your regard to them. His sabbaths, his ordinances, his ministers, his members, his poor, are not only dear to him, but are, in a sense, himself; and what you do to them he considers as done for himself. And can you do too much for *him*? Consider the dignity of his person, the nearness of his relations, the immensity of his claims. Oh! think of him who remembered you in your low estate, who, when "he was rich, for your sakes became poor," and died that you might live, and is now your advocate with the Father, and making all things work together for your good; all your salvation, and all your desire. And Oh! let his love constrain you to feel and exemplify what you often sing:

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Thirdly, Be not surprised or discouraged if you meet with dislike, opposition, and reproach, in your best endeavors. You are a peculiar people, and many of your observers "will think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." The world knoweth you not, and you are not to wonder if the world hate you. They hate you because you are not of the world, and by your conversion are apostates from their party. They may call your faith, folly; your hope, presumption; your meekness, meanness; and your zeal, enthusiasm; but, like Peter and John, you are to "rejoice that you are counted worthy to suffer shame for his name;" and to say with David—"if this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile."

And if you pass from the world into the church, you may, even there, meet with swellings (if not tumults) and evil surmises, and unkind accusations. Yea, you may meet with painful treatment from even good and godly men; for the pious are not always wise; or always able to enter into your views and plans, while yet they will readily undertake to decide concerning them. You must not expect every one to acquiesce in your convictions, or to admire your approbations; but in the midst of divers opinions, and even of the strifes of tongues, your rejoicing is to be the testimony of your conscience; and your motto this;

Careless, myself a dying man,
Of dying men's esteem;
Happy, O God, if thou approve,
Though all besides condemn.

Fourthly, Jesus will not allow you to be sufferers

by anything you may do for him. " You may lose," says Henry, "*in* his service, but you cannot lose *by* it." He will be sure to repay you, either in kind, or in equivalence. " And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

What the prince said to his prime minister, the Lord says to each of his servants, " Mind my affairs, and I will mind yours." And if he cares for you, your concerns will be much better managed than by any attentions of your own; for he knows all things, and has all hearts at his disposal, and all events under his control. He can make you rich, and add no sorrow with it. He can restore and preserve your health, so that all your "bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee?" He can "make your enemies to be at peace with you." He can give you comfort in all your connexions. He can "make darkness light before you, and crooked things straight." He can do for you "exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think." When the eye can no longer bless you, or the ear give witness unto you, your memory shall be blessed; and God will not "forget your work of faith, and labor of love."

If you should die under reproach, the reproach will soon be rolled away; and from every cloud you "shall shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of your Father." Many have had things laid to their charge which they knew not; they have been spoiled of their goods, they have been immured in prisons, they have been defamed by the tongues of persecutors and bigots,

and by the pens of lying historians. This was the case with Bunyan, and with the Nonconformists, “of whom the world was not worthy,” and with thousands more;—and they seemed abandoned. But, no. How have they been honored in subsequent ages! And their day is yet coming; called “the manifestation of the sons of God;” when there shall be a resurrection of characters, as well as of persons; and the Judge of all “will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.”

LECTURE XI.

THE POOR WIDOW.

And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they who have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

MARK, xii. 41-44.

WHEREVER there is a Temple there should be a Treasury. The friends of the “man lame from his mother’s womb,” showed their prudence, in laying him “daily at the gate of the temple, to ask alms of them that entered in.” Piety and liberality, devotion and charity, harmonize well together. The “prayers and alms” of Cornelius “came up for a memorial before God:” and what is required of us but “to love mercy,” as well as “to do justly, and to walk humbly with our God”?

God is not only great, but gracious and bountiful, and is to be resembled as well as worshipped. Indeed, our imitation of him is the best mode of our

adoration and praise, and therefore, says the Saviour, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you ; that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven : for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.”

Even under the legal dispensation it was commanded that none should “appear before the Lord empty :” and the Jewish worshippers were called upon to “go and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.” When Ornan offered to give to David his ground for an altar, his oxen for a sacrifice, his threshing instruments for the wood, and his wheat for a meat offering, David refused, and said, “Nay, but I will verily buy it for the full price : for I will not take that which is thine for the Lord ; neither will I offer unto the Lord, my God, of that which doth cost me nothing.” This was a noble resolution ; and he never swerved from it through life, but constantly said, “I will freely sacrifice unto thee, O Lord.” May we all partake of the same spirit, and exemplify the same determination : that “none of us may live to himself, and no one die to himself : but whether we live, we may live unto the Lord ; and whether we die, we may die unto the Lord ; so that whether we live or die, we may be the Lord’s.”

But to our subject. “Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury : and many that were rich cast in much.

And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they who have cast into the treasury : for all they did cast in of their abundance ; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."

Let us I. REVIEW THE NARRATIVE.

And II. ENQUIRE FOR WHAT PURPOSE our Saviour *then* called his disciples, and *now* calls us to consider and observe it.

I. We REVIEW THE NARRATIVE itself.

In doing this, we mark *First*, *The Saviour's Observatory*. "Jesus sat over against the treasury." The Saviour "was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;" and as he never passed an idle hour, and never spake a useless word, so he never performed an action without a motive, and a motive becoming himself. He did not, therefore, assume this position, as a place of display. He could well say, "I seek not honor from men." He never did anything to be seen of men ; unless the action rendered it unavoidable, or it was for the benefit of the observers ; and this license he allows his disciples ; "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

We may be equally sure that he placed himself in

this position, not for anything like entertainment, or curiosity; but his purpose was to furnish himself with matter for illustration, instruction, and improvement, as a teacher who was to "speak as never man spake," speaking "as one having authority, and not as the Scribes;" not dealing in dry speculations, and tame declamations, but enlivening his addresses by individualities, facts, examples, similitudes; speaking so that his hearers would be able to understand and feel; preaching the gospel to the poor, and binding up the broken-hearted. Hence he could say, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." A preacher should be a man whose "lips keep knowledge," and who is able to distinguish things that differ; for which he must prepare himself by much observation. Accordingly, we here find the "teacher sent from God," himself intent on this object.

And mark *Secondly, His Inspection*. He "beheld how the people cast money into the treasury." But how did he behold it? Was it with his bodily eycs? This indeed was partially the case, but not fully; that is, he could thus see the givings, but not the differences of the gifts. It is, however, obvious that he saw the one as well as the other; and this required more than eyes of flesh. And why should we forget that he possessed more than human perception and discernment? Peter acknowledged his omniscience, and was not reproved when he said, "Lord, thou knowest all things." It was prophesied of him that he should be "of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord;" and should "not judge after the sight of his eyes, nor

reprove after the hearing of his ears;" and how often did he answer invidious and malicious questions, not according to their palpable import, but to the state of mind, and the designs of the propounders; covering them with shame, convicted as they were in their own consciences. He apprehended the forsaking of his disciples, the denial of Peter, and the treason of Judas, before there was any human probability of either. He had a knowledge that gained nothing by events; and "needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man."

And let us not view this as a truth in which *we* have no concern; we are under the same inspection; and he who saw all that passed on the occasion before us, sees all now: "neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." In particular, I would remark, that he sees what are *your* views, and feelings, and doings, with regard to *your* pecuniary affairs; for "the silver and the gold are his," not only as to their disposal and control, but also as to their acquisition and possession.

Yes, he beholds you in the *acquisition* of your property; and sees whether it is in the sober use of lawful means, and with dependence on "the blessing of the Lord, which maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow with it;" or in the strainings of him that "maketh haste to be rich, and is not innocent;" and the darings of them who "will be rich, and fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." Do you undervalue what

you wish to buy, and praise what you mean to sell beyond its real worth? If you do not rob, do you not defraud? If you do not plunder, do you not supplant? Do you oppress the poor? Do you under-pay your servants and workmen? Is "the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, kept back by fraud"?—

He seeth!

He also beholds you in the possession of your property; whether, as "riches increase," you "set your heart upon them;" whether you "make gold your hope, and fine gold your confidence;" whether you are saying to your soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;" whether you are hoarding instead of using, or whether you are spending your substance in the pride of life, in idleness, or dissipation, or vice; or whether you give, and *what* you give, and *for* what you give, and *how* you give; and whether grudgingly or cheerfully.—

He seeth!

And thus, both in the getting and in the using of property, we are under the eye of this Judge of all.

Mark, *Thirdly, His Distinction of the Donors.* All alike gave, but all gave not alike. Two parties are recognized by him.

The one, *wealthy.* "Many that were rich cast in much." That the rich should give, and give largely, and that this should be the case with numbers of them too, was to their honor; especially as the practice has never been common.

The other *indigent;* and as particulars strike more

than generalities, an individual is here specified. She was "a certain poor widow." Widows are characters often met with in Scripture, but this widow is very distinguishable from many of them; for she appears not as a receiver, but as a giver; not as a beneficiary, but as a benefactress. The widow whose husband had died insolvent, the widow of Sarepta, the widows weeping for Dorcas, all these were in circumstances of distress, and requiring assistance; and widows are commonly spoken of as desolate; are mentioned in connection with another afflicted class, the fatherless; and are represented as peculiarly liable to oppression and injury.

Much experience in sorrow breeds sympathy. They who have felt the heavy blow themselves, will not easily turn a deaf ear, and an unfeeling heart, to a fellow sufferer, who, by reason of his anguish, cries, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye, my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me." "Be kind to strangers," said God to Israel, "for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."

It is not, therefore, surprising that a poor widow should be noted in relation to charity. But a disposition to give is one thing, ability is another; and, therefore, while the rich gave much, this widow "threw in" only "two mites, which make a farthing."

Such were the donors our Saviour recognized, and such were their respective contributions. They differed widely in their real substance, and would give rise to various judgments concerning them.

It is easy to conceive what the givers themselves

would think of them. The rich would be satisfied; imagining that they had done their duty, if not more than was required of them; and even paid a compensation for delinquencies. While the poor widow would deem what she had done unworthy of notice; and, perhaps, felt ashamed to cast into the treasury such a mean trifle.

Others, who were lookers on, had they known what the parties gave, would have extolled the one as prodigies of liberality; while they would have treated the other with neglect, or reproached her for giving what she could not afford, and contemned her offering as an insult rather than a benefaction.

But how were they viewed by him “whose eyes are as a flame of fire,” and “who searcheth the reins and the hearts”? For “not he who commendeth himself,” or whom man commendeth, “is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.”

This leads us to mark, *Fourthly, The Decision*, which the Saviour pronounces with regard to their claims. “He called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they who have cast into the treasury; for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.”

At first this seems strange; and our Lord could not mean that she had given more than all the others, as to quantity, or as to quality; but more, as to motive; more, as to principle; more, as to disposition; more, relatively as to their condition and her circumstances; more, comparatively.

And here we introduce the fine observation of Mr. Henry, that “charity is to be judged of, not by what is given, but by what is left.” Though these men had given much, they had done it “of their abundance,” and superfluity; and could go home to houses filled with plenty, and to tables spread with all kinds of viands; while she shivered home to a lonely apartment, and opening her larder, found nothing for the day, unless as the coming in from hard toil, or the effect of casual supply.

Let us pass to the SECOND part of our subject, and having examined the narrative itself, let us inquire, FOR WHAT PURPOSE the Saviour called his disciples *then*, and for what purpose he calls us *now*, to observe it?

Would he not teach us, that we are not to estimate things absolutely, or abstracted from their relations and circumstances?

The very taking away of life is not necessarily, or in itself, murder. In the magistrate it is the execution of justice. The same commendation may be flattery or praise, according to the mind of the speaker. A thousand circumstances will debase or ennable an action, materially the same. Thus in alms-giving a sovereign may be less than a farthing, and a farthing may be more than a sovereign.

And here we would observe that, as many of the respective circumstances which justify or condemn, enhance or aggravate conduct, are often beyond the reach of our discernment, it becomes us to be mindful of the admonition, “Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

Again, would he not, by this decision, teach us

that "*his* thoughts are not *our* thoughts, nor *his* ways *our* ways;" and he that "seeth not as man sceth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." "That which is highly esteemed among men, may be an abomination in the sight of God;" and that which is despised among men may be precious in his esteem.

The question therefore is, how we stand with regard to him, and what we are in his view, as to our persons and performances. "With me," says the Apostle to the Corinthians, "it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: he that judgeth me is the Lord." And so should it be with us.

Above all, would he not teach us that in his eyes the rule with regard to liberality is *proportion*? This appears to be the main inference to be drawn from the subject; and it may usefully be applied to three things—the Prevention of Envy:—the Encouragement of Penury:—and the Humiliation of Pride.

First, It will apply to the Prevention of Envy.

"The spirit that is in us lusteth to envy;" and it sometimes operates under a notion which *seems* to sanctify it. "Oh!" you sometimes say, "how happy are they that possess ample resources, and means of doing good? Oh! if I had such ability, what would I not accomplish? The blessing of him that is ready to perish should come upon me, and I would cause the widow's heart to sing for joy." But are you sure of this? Are the disposition and the capacity always equal and united? Have you not known many who have failed in the practice, as they increased in the

ability; so that they have not only done less, comparatively, than before, but even less, really? The case was, they did not think it worth while to be covetous, till they found it possible to accumulate; but indulgence in success encouraged them, and made them think of worshipping mammon.

Besides, if you wish to be rich in order to be benevolent, the thing is needless; where there is “first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.”

If nothing more than purpose in thy power,
The purpose firm is equal to the deed;
Who does the best his circumstance allows,
Does well, acts nobly: angels could no more.

Though a farthing was the least, it was also the greatest offering of the day.

Secondly, Here is Encouragement for Penury:—and the poor require it. We have known persons kept away from the house of God, because they could only appear in vile raiment; and others who have been prevented from coming to the table of the Lord, because they could put nothing into the communion plate.

Oh! what do some feel at public collections because they cannot give like others! and what do they feel when, in private applications, they are compelled to say, not from indisposition but inability, “Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, and give not those things which are needful to the body.” But let them remember, that though David could not build the temple, he could desire it, and purpose it, and it was

well that it was in his heart; and even the non-performance did not lose a reward. God, in estimating your services, admits into the account not only what you do, (which at most is very little,) but all you long to do, and would do if it were in your power; and this, in doing, magnifies the work, and in giving, the gift.

Let none, therefore, however humble their condition, or limited their means, suppose for a moment that they are doomed to uselessness; or conclude, that because they have not ten talents, or five, they cannot trade with one. This one may be laid up in a napkin, and the neglect to use it will constitute an unprofitable servant. It is a sad mistake of some, that because they cannot do much, they are justified in doing nothing. Oh! for the commendation of Mary! "She hath done what she could."

Thirdly, Here is Abasement for the Proud.

Of nothing, perhaps, are men vainer than their bounty, or what they give, especially if they give "much," though it be "of their abundance." But what is this "much," (so deemed by themselves and their admirers,) when it comes to be properly examined? Is it much materially? Is it much relatively? Is it much compared with what others give, whose means are unspeakably less? What sacrifice does the giving involve? What self-denial does it exercise? **WHAT IS LEFT?**

Yet we read of those who "bless the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth:" and it is lamentable to think how commonly this evil praise prevails. But can ministers be ever chargeable with it, who ought,

above all men to be no respecters of persons ? Alas ! do they not sometimes widen the doors of admission to the Lord's table, to receive the richer candidates, though they often prove the most troublesome members, and do far less to promote the common cause than their humbler brethren ? Do they not extol in memoirs, and cry up in funeral discourses, those, in their communion, who die scandalously rich ? They might at least give a gentle condemnation or censure on such characters ; or they might let them pass off from their communion in silence, as they frequently do some of the poor of their flock.

I am free to assert that, in a long life and ministry, and after much opportunity to inspect society, I have found the greatest instances of liberality and benevolence, not among the rich, but among the poor.

And their day is coming ; and what scenes will that day disclose, when "the Lord shall come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts : and then shall every man have praise of God." Then will he say to those prodigies of liberality and benevolence, who, in giving much, have given nothing ; " You have boasted of your doings, and been admired by your fellow-creatures ; you have received your consolation, and had your reward. Depart, and reflect forever on the good you *might* have done, and the evil you *have* done, by your riches, living and dying.

But to those who were poor in this world's goods, but "rich in faith ;" who gave what they could ill spare, or might have expended in nameless ways

on their own conveniences and wants ; and who in doing so little did much ; the liver on a straightened stipend ; the worn-out mechanic ; the hard laborer in the field ; the widow with her two mites ; he will say, " Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things ; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

LECTURE XII.

THE PENITENT SINNER.

And he said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman?—LUKE, vii 44.

WHAT affords pleasure to the angels of God? They have intercourse with our world, and know what is passing among men. They see the fields of battle; the revolutions of empires; the discoveries of philosophers; the improvements in arts and sciences; the extension of commerce; the civilizations of savage life. What among all these transactions and events yields them pleasure? It is, THE CONVERSION OF A SOUL.

This answer will not gratify the hero, the politician, the scholar, the merchant. It will surprise the “men of the world, who have their portion in this life;” and who only ask, “What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?” But we are assured by the lips of everlasting truth, that “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”

From this declaration, two things undeniably result, in the minds of all who believe it. The one is, The

disinterested Benevolence of these Heavenly Beings. Though they are the elder branches of the family, and have kept their first estate, yet, instead of repining at the return and reception of their younger brethren, they rejoice to see the prodigals restored, and placed in a state even superior to their own.

The other is, The Importance of Repentance. Little can be inferred from the censure or praise of men, or from the grief or joy of mortals. We are often agitated by trifles; we are full of ignorance, and are governed by prejudice; we call evil good, and good evil; we put darkness for light, and light for darkness. But it is otherwise with the angels of God. They are proverbial for their knowledge; no ignorance deludes, no prejudice warps them. They "always behold the face of our Father who is in heaven." They are perfect beings; and their judgment is always according to truth.

And do *they* rejoice over one sinner that repenteth? Then there is no subject more momentous and interesting than repentance. Then there is no subject more worthy of the attention of preachers, or the self-examination of hearers. Then we need not wonder that we find so many calls to it, and so many instances of it, recorded in the Scriptures.

To one of these instances, and a very striking one, your thoughts are now summoned.

Thus reads the whole relation:—" And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat

in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet, behind him, weeping ; and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him ; for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor who had two debtors ; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most ? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman ? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet ; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss : but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint : but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven ; for she loved much : but to whom little is forgiven; the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also ? And he said to

the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace."

I address each of you in the language of our Saviour to Simon, "Seest thou this woman?" You say, Yes. But do you *observe* her? Do you *study her character and history?* Do you study her character and history, so as to *apply them to the purposes of spiritual instruction and improvement?*

Let us consider,

I. WHAT WE MAY SEE IN THE CHARACTER OF THIS WOMAN.

II. WHAT WE MAY LEARN FROM HER HISTORY.

We are to inquire,

I. WHAT MAY WE SEE IN THE CHARACTER OF THIS WOMAN?

We see in her—a *Sinner*. We see in her—a *Reclaimed Sinner*. We see in her—a *Pardoned Sinner*.

First, We see in her a *Sinner*. So she is expressly called : "a woman who was a *Sinner*." We are all sinners. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." But it is not in this general sense that the term is here employed by the sacred historian. Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened, was a sinner; but though she was not a believer, she was virtuous before her conversion, and as a proselyte "worshipped God." But

this woman was infamous. Perhaps she had at first yielded to her own depraved dispositions, and gone voluntarily astray. Perhaps she had been originally drawn aside by some rich villain, some flattering hypocrite, some “child of the devil,” who was “a liar and a murderer from the beginning.”

However this may be, we ought never to speak of such characters in the way of extenuation. They are guilty even in the outset; for they have sense and reason; and they cannot be ignorant that everything dear and valuable is sacrificed with the surrender of virtue.

But who can think, without horror and execration, of progress and perseverance in such a course of vice? Surely if there were any remains of principle, the individual would rather die, than live in the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death, trading in iniquity, constantly endeavoring to ensnare, and seduce, and destroy.

The Scripture, therefore, does not speak of such characters as pitiable, but as criminal; not as imposed upon, but as deceiving; not as corrupt, but as corrupters. “And I find more bitter than death, the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her.” “For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell.” We know this woman before us was guilty in no small degree. Our Saviour’s comparison

supposes her to owe "five hundred pence;" and he pronounces her sins to have been "many," though "forgiven."

Secondly, We see in her *a Reclaimed Sinner.* In every subject of divine grace, a change takes place, which explains and verifies the promise; "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." Many talk much of the grace of God, but the best way to magnify this grace is to show what it has done *for* us, and what it has done *in* us; for the Scripture lays it down as a truth that admits of no exception, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." And if you ask, wherein does this change appear in the character before us? it is answered;

It appears in her *Courage.*

It requires courage in a man, not only to forsake favorite sins, to pluck out a right eye, and to cut off a right hand; but to risk the displeasure of friends; to brave the reproach of singularity and preciseness; to endure the scourge of the tongue; to make a kind of public profession of his former follies; and to take shame to himself before the eyes of those who will treat his conduct as weakness or hypocrisy. Hence, men who have been bold in a bad cause, have often been timid in a good one. They have been open in sin, and reserved in duty. They have gloried in their shame, and have been ashamed of their glory. We read of some who believed in our Lord, but feared to

confess him, “lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” Even Nicodemus, to avoid notice, “came to him by night.”

But see this woman. She goes and exposes herself before a large company. She goes alone. She goes uninvited. She is liable to be censured as an intruder, to be condemned as a disturber of the festive scene. She knew that the vileness of her former character would render her peculiarly obnoxious. She knew that she was going to the house of a Pharisee, who would think his very dwelling polluted by her entrance. She knew that the company would probably look upon her with disdain and contempt; and not fail, under her present appearance of devotion, to brand her with her former life. But none of these things move her.

After all, do you wonder at her confidence; and, while allowing for a difference in the manners of the age and country, do you find it difficult to account for her conduct? Remember the force of divine truth, when it enters the conscience; and remember also that the grace of God, while it enlightens the understanding to perceive the importance of eternal things, blinds us to carnal reasons, upon a thousand difficulties which self-love would oppose at our entrance into a religious life; and that there are acts of piety, as there are strokes of genius, which must be felt rather than coldly criticised.

It appears in her *Humility*.

For in the day of conviction, “the proud looks are humbled, the lofty looks are laid low, and the Lord

alone is exalted." Though determined to accomplish her purpose, whatever difficulties opposed her design, she does it in a way which proves that her zeal is not pride and vainglory. She wishes to attract the notice of none but the Saviour, and seems to shrink from the very attention she longs to awaken. "How can I look him in the face?" She, therefore, comes "*behind him.*"

Do you remember nothing like this in your own feelings, when a sense of sin urged you to the Friend of sinners? The poor Pilgrim, when she came to the door which she wished above all things to enter, trembled as she knocked; she knocked softly, not from a want of earnestness, but a sense of meanness and guilt; and then drew aside, as if afraid of the admission she sought. When Peter saw the Saviour's glory displayed, in the miracle of the fishes, he exclaimed, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." This was not the language of aversion, but of conscious unworthiness, rendered the more deep and humbling by the display of his glory and power.

This woman does not aspire to be a guest; she deems it enough to assume the place and office of a menial handmaiden, to wash his feet. And thus the prodigal is satisfied with the thought of the lowest station he could occupy, provided it be in his father's house. "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am not worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants."

It appears in her *Contrition.*

The heart of stone is turned to flesh. She weeps; weeps bitterly; weeps abundantly. And truly, there

is enough in sin to make a transgressor mourn. It has “brought death into the world, and all our woe.” It has turned the earth into a vale of tears; gendered the worm that never dies, and kindled the fire that never shall be quenched. It exposes us to the wrath to come, and prepares us for fellowship with the devil and his angels.

But what says the prophet? “They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.” And what made this woman pour forth such a flood of tears? Did they only, or principally, flow from a sense of her danger? Many are only affected with the evil of sin in the misery it incurs. If they are grieved, it is not that they are polluted, but that they are punishable; not that they have acted a vile part, but a destructive one.

But this is not the “godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation; and needeth not to be repented of.” The true penitent sees that his sin is folly and madness, ingratitude and treachery. He sees that he has transgressed, not only times without number, but a law that is holy, and just, and good. He sees that he has offended a Being infinitely worthy of all his regards. He sees that this Being, even while he was rebelling against him, was loading him with benefits; and is, even now, after all his provocations, waiting to be gracious, and exalted to have mercy upon him. Then his heart dissolves; then he wishes that his head were waters, and his eyes a fountain of tears; and, sorrowing after a godly sort, he manifests the fulfilment

of the divine promise, “I will establish my covenant with thee ; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord : that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.”

It appears in her *Attachment*.

She washes his feet with her tears ; she wipes them with the hairs of her head ; she embraces them ; and anoints them with a costly perfume. Judas kissed our Lord, but it was in order to betray him. Many “draw nigh unto him with their mouth, and honor him with their lips, while their heart is far from him.” But where the heart is given, nothing will be withheld, however dear or valued. This woman, therefore, employs her best ornament to honor him ; she sacrifices the precious perfume which she had purchased to expend upon her own person ; relinquishing the claims of vanity for the duties of devotion ; thinking nothing of herself, but only of her Saviour ; and esteeming nothing too precious to sacrifice in the meanest service for him. .

It appears in her *Faith*.

Many would have overlooked this, but our Saviour sees and remarks it. He well knew that faith was the ground of her application ; that it was the source of her courage, her humility, her sorrow, and her affection. These were only fruits ; faith was the root that bore them. She hoped that he would receive her. She believed that “with the Lord there was mercy, and with him plenteous redemption.” She had a confidence that, unworthy as she was, he

would "in nowise cast her out." He, therefore, "said unto her, Thy *faith* hath saved thee; go in peace."

Thirdly, We see in her a *Pardoned Sinner*.

When David looked around to find a happy man, he does not say, blessed is he whose grounds bring forth plentifully; blessed is the man who governs nations with a nod; blessed is the man that strides from victory to victory; blessed is the man who is admired for genius and science. To many of these claims and distinctions he was himself no stranger; he was a musician, and a poet, and a hero, and a king; but the insufficiency of all these he deplored; and he prayed, "Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name."

But he exclaims, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." He has the true notion of blessedness; and he has the reality. The whole of his happiness is insured; the whole of it is begun. He is blessed in his duties; blessed in his comforts; blessed in his trials. To him affliction has no curse; death has no sting; eternity has no terrors.

Such was the privilege of this woman; and two things enhance it.

It was a *present* blessing. It was not said, "Her sins, which are many, *shall be* forgiven;" but "*are* forgiven."

It was, also, an *assured* benefit. Our safety depends upon our state; our consolation is much influenced by our knowledge. Not a few of the people of

God go mourning all their days for want of the "full assurance of hope." But this woman is not left for a moment in uncertainty. "He said to the woman, Thy sins are forgiven. Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace."

We do not envy her the distinguished privilege with which she was favored. But O Saviour, we long to share in the same blessedness. We long to be able to praise thee, as the health of *our* countenance, and *our* portion forever. Through many a benighted hour have we been waiting for thee, "more than they that watch for the morning." Scatter the doubts and fears that have enveloped and dismayed us, and "say unto my soul, I am thy salvation."

Let us inquire.

II. WHAT MAY WE LEARN FROM THE HISTORY OF THIS WOMAN?

First, We learn from it the *Disposition of Pharisees.*

How well does our Saviour describe them, when he speaks of "certain, who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others."

How well did he exemplify, and contrast, and condemn their temper, when he said, "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself; God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the Publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much

as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased: and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." How often did these self-justiciaries murmur, as a reproach to the Saviour himself, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." So here: "When the Pharisee who had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner." Here is censure without consideration. Here is judgment without mercy. Here is exclusion without hope. A sinner, even upon his return, is to be cut off, even from the means of grace, and forbidden all intercourse with the preacher of righteousness! "Let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great; and let us not fall into the hand of man!"

Secondly, We learn from it *the Condescension and Kindness of the Saviour.*

Power may cause its possessors to be feared; wealth, to be envied; learning, to be admired; and beauty, to be flattered; but it is genuine goodness alone that can gain the heart." "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." But where are we now, and what do we see in the Lord Jesus? Even his giving to this man his company serves to display a little of his character; and to rectify the mistake of some of his followers. The Pharisees were his bitterest

enemies. They did not even allow his mission as a prophet. Simon, therefore, asks him to his house, only to gratify his friends and acquaintances, or to indulge his own curiosity, or to gain reputation by having so extraordinary an individual to be his guest. Yet our Saviour, though he knew this, accepts the invitation; for "he went about doing good;" not only embracing, but seeking and sanctifying all opportunities of diffusing instruction, pleasure, and profit.

But see the benign attention he pays to this woman, and the kind defence he makes in her behalf. Had she touched Simon, he would have been filled with horror, and have exclaimed, "Stand by thyself, come not near me, I am holier than thou." This is what he wishes our Saviour to have done. But he is mistaken in his character; he is perfectly ignorant of the being he entertains.

It had been said, long before, in prophecy, "Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips." "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth." "He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust." Who embodied these representations? He who "saw the multitude, and had compassion upon them, because they were as sheep having no shepherd." He who said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He who said, "I came not to call

the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." He who said to the woman taken in adultery, and turned over by her merciless fellow-sinners to his judgment, "Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more." He who, in a voice softer than the breath of heaven, said to this woman, "Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace."

Thirdly, We learn from it, that we should *consider none of our fellow-creatures as entirely abandoned.*

While there is life, there is hope :

And while the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return.

We grant that there are some for whom we feel, and ought to feel great alarm. There are some who seem to have sinned away everything like conscience; and to have gone such lengths in wickedness, that only a divine arm can reach them. But let us remember there *is* such an arm. And what this arm can do is not left for conjecture to determine. We can appeal to facts. We know what it can do, from what it has done; for with him "there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning;" "his hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear."

Think of this, ye parents, who, after all your prayers, and efforts, and tears, see your children walking the downward road. Think of this, ye ministers, who, after preaching for twenty years, see no religious movement among many of your gospel-hardened hearers. "God is able of these stones to raise up

children unto Abraham." How often, at the admission of members, has a church exclaimed, "Who hath begotten me these? These, where have they been?"

But, you say, such a character is so unlikely. What! more unlikely than Manasseh, that son of a pious father, who had withstood all the influences of a good education; who had become an idolater, a necromancer, a bloody murderer? Yet, "in his affliction, he sought the Lord God of his fathers, and he was found of him." Had you seen Saul of Tarsus at the stoning of Stephen, holding the raiment of them that slew him, and afterwards halting men and women to prison, how little could you have expected to see *him* a disciple, a preacher, an apostle, a martyr. "I was," says he, "a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, but I obtained mercy. For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who shall hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

Fourthly, We learn from it, that *no distressed conscience should despair.*

This article is distinguishable from the former. That was designed to keep us from relaxing in our endeavors to save others; this is intended to prevent all discouraging conclusions with regard to ourselves.

I know, that fear follows guilt. I know that when you think of returning to God, conscience may forebode his rejecting you. It requires "strong consolation" to bear up the mind under a sense of numberless and heinous transgressions, and to enter

the presence of him whom we have so often and so dreadfully provoked. But there is “strong consolation” for those that are “fleeing for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them.” “As I live,” said the Lord, by the prophet Ezekiel, “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.” And he says it here, “See what manner of sinners my mercy can forgive, and my grace restore.” “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

May his goodness lead you to repentance. May the exceeding riches of his grace encourage your application to him. O guard against despair. The gate of life stands open, but despair shuts it, locks it, and throws the key into the bottomless pit. Despair, by making us believe that means are useless, keeps us from using them; and thus our recovery is rendered impossible, because deemed unattainable. Hope is the source of all exertion. Hope melts me. Hope draws me, draws me to his feet.—

Should worlds conspire to drive me thence,
Moveless and firm this heart shall lie;
Resolved, for that's my last defence,
If I must perish, there to die.

Finally, We learn from it that our Gratitude will be influenced by a sense of our obligations.

This our Saviour brings Simon to acknowledge. “There was a certain creditor who had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.” By this principle he accounts for the indifference of the Pharisee, and the zeal of the woman. “I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much.” Not meaning that her love was the cause of the pardon, but the consequence. As if he had said, “She would not have felt such ardor, and displayed such devotedness, had she not been sensible how much she was indebted to my goodness.” “But to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.” A slight acknowledgment will be deemed sufficient for a trifling favor.

Why are many so cold and lifeless in their regards to the Redeemer of Sinners? They are hardly convinced that they *are* sinners. In reality there are no little offenders. But many suppose their offences

to be small, especially when they compare themselves with viler characters. Now in proportion as we view ourselves to be innocent, shall we feel our need of divine grace diminished. If we imagine we can make any amends to the law we have transgressed, by our repentance and reformation, so much we shall detract from the obligation we are under to the atoning sacrifice of Christ. If we can establish a righteousness of our own, we shall not submit ourselves to the righteousness which is of God; nor, of course, be thankful for its provision and imputation. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick;" and they who feel themselves most attached to him, and who think they can never say enough in his praise, are not those whom he has saved from an ordinary pain or infirmity, but those who have been rescued by him from the most desperate malady, and from the jaws of death.

Here, then, we see of what importance it is to entertain proper views of the fall, of the evil of sin, of the depravity of our nature, and of the misery we have deserved. These views are often censured as gloomy and injurious; but it would be easy to prove not only how true they are, but how important they are, even on a practical account, both to awaken the conscience to seek pardon, and also to excite to gratitude and obedience when it is attained.

It must be admitted that there are degrees in sin. Our Saviour compares some sins to motes, and others to beams; some to gnats, and others to camels. He here allows that one contracts a larger debt than another; and represents that he who has had a debt

of five hundred pence remitted, should feel more than the man who has had a debt of fifty pence. He who has been the greatest sinner should be the greatest saint.

But here I would remark two things.

First, The greatest sinners are not always the grossest. Sin is to be judged of by its aggravations; and its aggravations arise from the convictions and cautions, the means and motives which we have neglected and contemned. Perhaps some of the guiltiest individuals in our world are those who are decent in their conduct, but have enjoyed all the means of grace from their infancy, and yet have been insensible under them; who have constantly worshipped God, but have mocked him with a solemn sound upon a thoughtless tongue; who have heard the words of eternal life, and trampled them under foot.

Secondly, All those who are taught of God see enough in themselves to make them admire the freeness and fulness of that grace which has saved *them*. They have seen only the lives of others; but as to themselves, they have looked into their own hearts, and have found them to be “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” They cannot judge the motives of others, but they have examined their own. They know not what excuses others may be able to plead, while they acknowledge that *they* have no cloak for *their* sin. They compare themselves with that law, the spirituality of which they are now enlightened to see. What wonder, therefore, that, if less vicious than others, they should yet see themselves to be more sinful; and, in proportion as they

hope in his mercy, ask, with an emphasis peculiar to themselves, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?” “Lord what wilt thou have me to do?”

Great King of Grace, my heart subdue;
I would be led in triumph too,
A willing captive to my Lord,
And sing the victories of his word.

LECTURE XIII.

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

PART I.

There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.—JOHN, iv. 7.

IT is very pleasant and profitable to follow our Lord and Saviour in his career of mercy; to contemplate his power under the direction of his goodness; to behold him feeding a hungry multitude upon the ground, opening the eyes of the blind, causing the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak; here, raising from the grave a dead brother, and restoring him to his weeping sisters; and there, calling back from the dead an only son, and delivering him to his widowed mother. And yet, if we are like-minded with angels, who “rejoice over one sinner that repenteth,” we shall feel ourselves still more strongly and delightfully attracted to the contemplation of the wonders of divine grace, in which we behold him accomplishing spiritual cures, quickening those “who were dead in trespasses and sins,” and from the ruins of the fall producing “eternal excellencies, the joy of many generations.”

We now enter on a passage of sacred history, recorded with singular fulness and minuteness. It relates the conversion of a woman, previously vile and infamous; and whose change, no less remarkable than divine, serves to verify and illustrate the language of Isaiah ; “Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree : and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

Our Lord was now journeying, to escape the envy and malice of the Pharisees ; for “his hour was not yet come ;” and he would give us an example of his own doctrine, “when they persecute you in one city, flee ye unto another.” We may change our residence, though we must never change our religion. We are not called to suffer, when we may avoid it without sin. Courage is not rashness, but wise and useful firmness and resolution.

In going from Judea into Galilee, Samaria lay in the direction of his road ; it was therefore necessary for him to pass through it. He soon reached one of their cities, here called Sychar, but formerly, Sychem, or Shechem. The place is often mentioned in the Scriptures. Here Joshua assembled the tribes of Israel before his death, and made his solemn appeal. Here Dinah roved, and by her folly occasioned the destruction of the inhabitants. Very near it was the parcel of ground which Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Here also was Jacob’s well ; a well which he probably digged, but certainly made use of.

As people are always struck with antiquity, this well must have been an object of great curiosity, and

would have awakened many reflections in the mind of an intelligent traveller. How many empires had risen and fallen in succession, while this fountain had remained the same. How many generations were now mouldered to dust, who had been refreshed by its cooling supplies. Though every production here is doomed to perish, yet many things, compared with man, are durable and permanent. Cultivation rapidly passes from hand to hand, but the earth abideth for ever. A man plants a tree, his sons soon behold it growing towards maturity, and some of their remote descendants may see it begin to wither and decay. But "what is our life? A vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

We are prone to overrate some things, and to overlook others. Many achievements which once drew the attention and admiration of thousands, and which had occasioned an enormous expenditure of wealth and labor, were of little importance or utility compared with this homely well, which a few rude hands had digged, and which was destined to survive them all. But the event, which reflects the highest honor upon it, and which will render it interesting, not only to the end of time, but through all eternity, was yet to come. It was to be dignified with the presence of such a visitor as, in the course of two thousand years, had never approached it before. It was to afford rest and refreshment to the Lord of life and glory. And it was to witness the conversion of one poor sinner, who by her testimony would be the means of converting numbers more.

"Jesus being wearied with his journey, sat thus

on the well." His languor and fatigue will not appear at all wonderful, when we consider three things.

First, That he was truly, though not only, a man. "The Word was made flesh." He was therefore a partaker of all the infirmities of human nature. He feared; he was hungry and thirsty; he was susceptible of lassitude, and required repose to renew his strength.

Secondly, The manner of his travelling: for as "he went about doing good," so he did this on foot. We read only once of his riding; and that was on a borrowed beast, "an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass."

Thirdly, The season: it was the very heat of the day; being high noon. The Evangelist expressly remarks that "it was about the sixth hour."

But had he really no more in view, by pausing and reposing here, than bodily ease and refreshment? Yes; here the good shepherd was searching for a strayed sheep; and he knew where to find it, and how to bring it into his fold. He was here to exemplify words which he had uttered prophetically ages before; "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." Here he was to prove that his mercy is preventing, as well as free; and that however far we go back, we shall always find him there previously, waiting to be gracious, and saying, "Come, for all things are now ready." Here he was to show us what great events spring out of apparently little and trifling circumstances; because he is the master of circumstances, appoints them, disposes them, and renders them effective.

All was casual as to the woman herself. She dreamed of nothing more than returning with her pitcher of water. But our Lord saw the end from the beginning; and beheld her returning, possessed of heavenly treasure, a rejoicing Christian, a herald of salvation.

Though this woman was a sinner, her coming forth to draw water herself, was commendable; and there are some who have even taken advantage of this to remark, that though "the gifts and calling of God" are as much without desert as they are "without repentance," yet he has often conferred them in such a way as to countenance and encourage diligence and industry. It is the devil that meets with us when we are idle. The angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds while they were keeping watch over their flocks by night. Matthew was called at the receipt of custom. Peter, and Andrew, his brother, were fishing; James the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, were mending their nets, when called by the Saviour. Elisha was ploughing when Elijah cast his mantle upon him, and said, "Follow me." Saul was seeking his father's asses when he met with Samuel, who anointed him king over Israel. Rebekah, Rachel, and Zipporah, all met with husbands, good husbands, extraordinary husbands, at the well's mouth, bearing their pitchers. But the woman of Samaria finds there, "the chief among ten thousand," the "altogether lovely," the "Lord of all;" and obtains "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

But let us see how our Saviour gains this woman; for "he that winneth souls is wise." I love to con-

template his agency in the kingdom of nature; to follow the windings of a river; to stand in a field of corn; to walk in a garden; to see him making his sun to rise, and his rain to descend; bringing forth the beauties of spring, and the treasures of summer; doing everything, and yet seeming to do nothing; doing all things, and doing all things well.

But, Oh! to attend him when he goes to get possession of a soul! He knows his aim. He is sure of his end. See with what calmness and self-possession he moves. He is doing a great work, but without effort, without noise. Here is no strong wind rending the mountains, no earthquake, no fire; but "a still small voice;" all is natural, yet divine.

How favorable the season! "his disciples were gone away into the city, to buy meat." How unsuitable would company have been in a case like this. There is business that can only be transacted between God and the soul. How often does religion take its rise from solitude. How seldom does the Saviour reveal himself in a crowd. Creatures die; friends withdraw; sickness sends us in from the world, and lays us upon a bed of languishing—whatever be the cause—how often, in the first interview, do we meet alone, and feel a heart's bitterness known only to ourselves, and a joy that strangers intermeddle not with.

How easy, how simple the circumstances that commenced the transactions here! An application for a draught of water, really necessary to quench his thirst, was designed to engage her in a conver-

sation, which, rising from things seen and temporal, should instruct her in those things that are not seen, and eternal. For when he asks, it is with a view to give, rather than to receive. He requires our hearts; but it is to enlighten them, to renew them, to give them rest. He could dispense with our services; but he demands them for our good, to improve us, and to honor us. He has a right to exact, but he condescends to beg; and this is to try our dispositions, and to insure our reward. Hence he conceals himself in events, in circumstances, in characters. We are not aware that in supporting such a cause, that in relieving such a distressed individual, we are succoring *him*. Did he appear in his sovereignty and glory, we could not refuse; and our love to the Gospel, or our love to our neighbor, could not be known. And yet he will say hereafter; "*I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; for inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.*"

The woman, perceiving by his dress, or by his dialect, that her petitioner was not one of her own nation, answers, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." It is unnecessary to dwell on the causes of this aversion in the Jews to the Samaritans; such as their early mixture of idolatry and superstition; the injurious manner in which they had treated the Jews, after the return from the Babylonish captivity; their profaning the priesthood, and worshipping the golden calves; and especially their building a temple which

they made the centre of their worship, in opposition to the temple at Jerusalem ; and the infamous offer which they made to Antiochus, of dedicating that temple to Jupiter, and admitting the rites of his pagan worship, at a time when the Jews were suffering so much in defence of their religion.

But it must have been a curious sight to have seen a Jew and a Samaritan meeting together in a narrow passage, each hissing “Touch me not ; stand by thyself ; come not near me ; I am holier than thou.”

There have been many too much like them in all ages. And we may observe, that quarrels about religion are generally the most rancorous, because the passions are here urged on by principle ; and men imagine that by their fierce enmity, they do God service. And we often see that those sects and communities which have many points of resemblance, are more hostile to each other than those which differ in everything. But, on whichever side the truth may be, when zeal forbids the offices of civility and charity, we may be sure it is “the wrath of man,” that “worketh not the righteousness of God ;” and if it be fire, it is not taken from God’s altar, but “it is set on fire of hell.”

Knowing the disposition of the Jews, this woman supposed that our Saviour was like them. This was natural ; and we see how prone all are to deal in general suspicions and reflections ; not recollecting that general reflections are commonly unjust ; that in all professions, and in all bodies of men, there are some worthy exceptions ; that there may be found even in religious denominations which we are compelled to censure, some detained there who are wiser than their

teachers, and better than their principles. Nothing can be worse, as a system, than Popery, yet there have been very good men in the Romish church.

Our Saviour does not impatiently reject her; he does not expressly answer her question; he does not renew his application; but he kindly insinuates that she had an invaluable opportunity afforded her, and that if wise, she would make a proper use of it. “He answered and said unto her, If thou knewst the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” What a mass of heavenly intelligence does this answer contain.

It teaches us, *What he is in himself*; “The gift of God;” by way of emphasis and distinction; an “unspeakable gift;” a gift, the value of which neither the tongues of men, nor of angels, can express; an infinite demonstration of divine love; perfectly adapted to our wants, and fully adequate to their relief; a gift insuring and containing every other; for “He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” “It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;” and of his fulness are we to receive, and grace for grace.”

It teaches us, *What he has to bestow*; “living water;” the graces and comforts of the Holy Ghost; all spiritual influencees and blessings; everything that can purify and refresh the soul.

It teaches us, *How we are to obtain this blessedness of him*. We must ask: nothing less is required, nothing more. This discovers our valuation of the

mercy ; endears it ; prepares us for the reception of it ; receives it by promise. "Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth." No instance can be found of a soul having been repulsed, who addressed him. He never "said unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain."

It teaches us, *The reason why men do not apply to him.* It is because they do not know him. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink ; thou wouldest have asked of him." Hence we see why ignorance is so injurious. Hence it is said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." "These things will they do, because they have not known the Father, nor me." "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes." And thus the Gentiles are said to be "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, having the understanding darkened, and because of the blindness of their heart :" and "the god of this world" is said to have "blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

. It is in religion as it is in nature, the understanding sways the will and the affections. "Wisdom is the principal thing ;" therefore we are to "get wisdom, and with all our getting to get understanding." The Apostle prays for the Ephesians, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may

give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him : the eyes of your understanding being enlightened ; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling." Till we see the evil of sin, we shall never abhor it, and mourn over it. Till we know Christ, we cannot desire him, depend upon him, apply to him, rejoice in him. Till we know him, we can know nothing, feel nothing, possess nothing, enjoy nothing.

And hence we see the difference between this woman and blind Bartimeus, on a similar occasion. Bartimeus was sitting by the wayside begging, when Jesus was passing by—but he *knew that it was Jesus* ; and therefore he cried, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." The multitude rebuked him, but he cried so much the more : "I can beg alms of others, but they cannot give me eyes. O help me to seek, and do not hinder me. This is my opportunity. He may never pass this way again. Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me ! Lord, that I may receive my sight !" "And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way."

But this woman stands trifling, or cavilling about some dispute, or schism, between her and her neighbours ; and neglects the prize put into her hands, because she does not understand it. She knew not the day of her visitation. She had no suspicion that our Lord was anything more than he appeared. She took him for a poor Jew, travelling this way, tired, and asking refreshment ; not knowing that he was the Son of God; who had come down from heaven to

save perishing sinners, and had life and blessedness to bestow. Nothing was further from her thoughts than that “God had so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Hence, nothing like prayer proceeded out of her mouth.

“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” When our Saviour had said to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;” Nicodemus, taking naturally what our Saviour intended spiritually, “saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?” It was the same with this woman; for, taking literally what he intended figuratively, she is at a loss to conceive how it could be possible for him to make good his promise of giving her living water, provided she had asked him. Thou canst not fetch it from this well, for “thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep.” Neither canst thou bring water superior to this from any other place: “Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?” What spring dost thou command? “Whence then hast thou that living water?”

To this our Saviour replies in language, not altogether figurative as before, but suited to lead her forwards by degrees. “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of

the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Here is the difference between the water of this well, and that of which I speak. This water is good and refreshing in its kind; it removes thirst; but not forever; the thirst returns: it does not give constant satisfaction; but mine does. When a man has once obtained this, it will be found a never-failing principle; it will continue (such is the tendency and effusion of it) till it issues in a state of everlasting enjoyment in another world.

What our Lord here says of the water of Sychar's well may be applied to everything earthly. There is no true satisfaction to be found in this world. "He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again." Every man desires happiness. This is his aim in every pursuit. It is not money, it is not honor, that he seeks after; but satisfaction by their means. Sin has not destroyed the natural capacity of the soul for happiness, but diverted it from the only object which is sufficient to render it happy; so that now, detached from his only centre and portion, he walks up and down in the world, destitute, afflicted, tormented; seeking rest, and finding none. "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." He has seldom enough of these things in quantity; but in quality there is always a deficiency. It is not in their power to fill the soul; they were never designed for this purpose; and if you look for that in them which God never intended them to afford, you are seeking the living among the dead; and you resemble a man, who

is running up and down in a dry place to find water, and increases his thirst, both by the labor and the disappointment.

But must he always go on, asking, "Who will show me any good?" Will no one direct him to a fountain of living waters? The Saviour cries, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Yes! Satisfaction is attainable, even in this world. What else mean these delightful expressions? "The Lord will satisfy thy soul in drought." "I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread." "He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures." "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips."

Hence the Christian can say, I have found what I was once seeking after in vain. I am no longer at a loss where to get rest or happiness. I have tried this water, of which the Saviour speaks; and I find it can satisfy. I want nothing more. It has weaned me from the world; and I no longer need prohibitions to keep me from its vanities and dissipations:

My heart is satisfied at home;
The Lord my portion is.

It has also enabled me to acquiesce in the will of Providence, with regard to my temporal concerns; "for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, there-

with to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

He has now a source of happiness independent of the body and its diseases, the world and its vicissitudes, death and its triumphs: for it is perpetual; and permanency adds bliss to bliss. He can now say, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

They are "born of incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth forever." This water is in them; not a pool, not a reservoir, but a well; ever sending forth streams; "a well of water springing up into everlasting life"—such is the constant working, such is the infallible issue of it. Heaven is in it, in the principle. Grace and glory differ only in the degree. Grace is glory in the bud, and glory is grace in the flower. Grace is glory in the child, and glory is grace in the man. Grace is glory in the dawn, and glory is grace in the day.

Here then we pause; reserving the remaining particulars for other opportunities.

In reviewing what has come under our notice, let us conclude by observing; *How much there is in the Saviour to imitate and admire.*

Come, and let us learn to "be followers of him, as dear children." Did he make it his business "to

seek and to save that which was lost? Let pity and zeal inspire us with the same concern, and urge us to the same endeavors. Did he render his journeys, and even his repose and refreshment, useful? Let us avail ourselves of every opportunity, and of every method, of "serving our generation, according to the will of God." Did he who "preached righteousness in the great congregation," descend to instruct a single individual? And did he converse with one who was deemed a heretic, and a sinner; from whom a Pharisee would have turned away? Let us remember the value of one soul; and abandon no one to whom we can have access. Did his "lips drop as a honey-comb;" and could he wisely and agreeably introduce religious conversation? Learn the same art; rise from present and common things, to those which are spiritual and heavenly. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

But, Oh! contemplate the character of our Lord and Saviour; and see what a diversity of properties and excellences is to be found in him. What majesty! what condescension! How poor! how rich! Oppressed with animal wants, and the source of all spiritual good; begging a cup of cold water, and promising eternal life! Behold in him everything that can fix the mind; everything that can fill the heart;

everything that can raise our wonder; everything that can satisfy our hope. But he is beyond the reach of representation, whatever relations or images we employ.

Nor earth, nor seas, nor sun, nor stars,
Nor heaven his full resemblance bears;
His beauties we can never trace,
Till we behold him face to face.

LECTURE XIV.

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

PART II.

Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.—JOHN, iv. 26.

I AM not only struck with the important truths of revelation, but also with the manner in which they are delivered. Here is nothing artificial, nothing labored. Everything is natural and easy. Nothing appears to be studied, nothing designed; but all seems accidentally to spring out of circumstances. Nothing can be found like a scheme of doctrine, systematically arranged, as in our “Bodies of Divinity;” but histories and epistles, facts and reflections, are thrown together in a beautiful irregularity; and our Saviour, who spake as never man spake, teaches us, by suffering us to be with him in the house, and in the road; to hear his discourses and his remarks; and to judge, from what he said in particular cases, what his sentiments are on all other subjects of the same kind.

One of the most remarkable of all our Saviour's

discourses, is the conversation he had with the woman of Samaria. It is peculiarly interesting, whether we consider the effects resulting from it, or the topics on which it turns. It commences from a present object, and takes occasion, from the water of Sychar's well, to inform the woman of that living water which Jesus had to communicate; infinitely superior in its properties and use to that which he had requested. "He said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

This left her mind in a state which it is not easy to determine. She immediately exclaimed, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." Did she say this in a way of pure banter? "O this is a thing indeed! It would save me a deal of pain, never more to thirst; and a deal of trouble never more to draw." Nothing is so offensive as treating divine subjects with ridicule. It does not follow that a thing is absurd, because it is for the time incomprehensible. A good man trembles at God's word. If, however, this was the ease with this woman, it would be far more excusable in her than it would be in us, because she did not possess the same advantages.

But let us hope that what she said was not ill-designed, but rather the language of ignorant wonder; some impression having now been made upon her mind; and that she began to suspect that some-

thing more was intended than was expressed. This seems to be unavoidable, from our Saviour's having connected the communication with "everlasting life."

But our Lord saw that it was necessary to do something more; and, therefore, he immediately applies himself to convince and alarm her conscience. And this is the proper method of dealing with sinners. It is not likely that we shall prize the physician while we are whole; or flee for refuge while we think we are safe. "The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." A certain state of mind, therefore, is necessary, not to recommend us to Christ, but to recommend Christ to us; and to enable us to understand the design, and feel the importance of his coming, work, and sufferings.

And in bringing a man to this state, we may observe that, commonly, some one particular sin, gross in its nature, and to which he has been addicted, is charged home upon the conscience. But though it begins, the conviction does not end here; and the man is soon led to more general and more spiritual views of his own depravity; till he discovers the natural root of all transgression, which is the heart; and sees it to be "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

But a broad surface is not likely to penetrate; it must be *pointed* to enter. The indictment which arraigns this criminal, like every other, exhibits some specific charge; and the man exclaims, "O my swearing, my lying, my Sabbath-breaking, my prayer-

less life!" Thus Peter charged the Jews with crucifying the Lord of life and glory; and "they were pricked in their heart, and said, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Thus Christ charged Saul with the sin in which he was then engaged; "Why persecutest thou me?" And thus our Saviour here accuses this woman of the sin in which she was then living. "Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband;" wishing to impose upon our Saviour, as if she had always been single, or was now a widow. But out of her own mouth he condemns her: "Thou hast well said, I have no husband; for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly." We have no reason to believe she had buried so many husbands. It is probable she had eloped from some of them, or by her unchaste carriage constrained them to forsake her. However this may be, she was now living in criminal intercourse with one, to whom she was married unlawfully, while another was her proper husband; or, which is more likely, to whom she was never married at all. How wise the expedient to bring her sin to her remembrance. How mild the reproof. How unanswerable the charge.

It is easy to imagine her surprise at hearing this narrative of her past and present life; and from a stranger too, one whom she had never seen before. But whatever inward confusion she feels, she does not attempt to deny the truth, or extenuate the guilt; nor does she seem displeased with our Lord's freedom.

But she exclaims, “Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.”

Two reasons may be assigned for her proposing this question so instantly and abruptly. It has been supposed, *First*, that it was by way of *diversion*; that, confounded by the discovery which had been made, and fearing more, she dexterously contrived in this manner to turn off the conversation to something more distant, and less personal. And it is no new thing for persons to endeavor to keep convictions from fastening upon their minds, instead of cherishing and strengthening them. Felix said, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.” Some have recourse to worldly dissipations to drown the voice of conscience. Some wretches drive away sorrow by drinking. But all such expedients will be found to fail in the end. The lion is only asleep; by and by it will rise and roar with tenfold fury. There is but one way of obtaining peace: it is not by stifling convictions, but by suffering them to lead you to Christ, who has said, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

But it has also been supposed, *Secondly*, that her aim was to seize the present moment to *gain information* as to what was deemed important, and which she concluded this knowing one might afford. If so, she is an example worthy of imitation; and shows us that when we are in the presence of those who can teach us, we should be concerned to learn; pro-

posing our doubts and difficulties ; always anxious to be set right ; and “redeeming the time,” that we may “not be unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.”

With regard to the object of her inquiry, and which was the grand question that divided the two parties, our Saviour allows that the Jews had the advantage of the Samaritans. He allows that Jerusalem was the place which God had chosen to put his name there ; that better notions of his perfections and pleasure prevailed among the Jews ; that to them were committed the divine oracles ; and that of them, as concerning the flesh, the Messiah was to come. It is his meaning, when he says, “Ye worship ye know not what : we know what we worship : for salvation is of the Jews.”

But he takes the opportunity to reduce the importance of the question, by observing that whatever stress had been laid on any of these external things, a dispensation was commencing which would lay all such distinctions aside. “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth ; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit ; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

Herein two things are observable.

First, That it should cool us, in many of our contests, to remember that the things we are contending about are of short duration ; and that while we are disputing

they are vanishing away. There are “things which cannot be shaken, but must remain.” Christian principles and blessings, concerning which the people of God agree, are permanent and eternal: but the hour cometh when forms of church government, and modes of discipline, and ceremonies and usages, which now set us at variance, will be seen no more; and if wonder and sorrow can enter heaven, we shall be surprised and grieved to think what an undue stress we laid on these things; and that we differed more about the scaffolding which was to be taken down, than about the building which was to remain. The question hereafter will not be, *with whom* we worshipped, but *whom* we worshipped; not *where* we worshipped, but *how* we worshipped.

For, *Secondly*, The best way to make up differences in little things, is to be zealous about great ones. To these, therefore, the Scripture always directs our regards; knowing that if these supremely occupy the mind, we shall have neither time nor inclination for comparative trifling. The best way to soften, if not to harmonize the sprinkled and the dipped, would be for both of them to be more concerned to be baptized with the Holy Ghost, and largely to partake of his influences and comforts. Communicants at the Lord’s table would not think much about sitting or kneeling, if only they were by faith showing forth the Lord’s death. In proportion as our hearts are right towards God, we shall feel properly towards others; pitiful, if they are in misery; forgiving, if they have offended us; candid, if they differ from us.

“I feel,” says the woman, “some hesitation.

hardly know whether what thou hast said upon this subject be true ; but one thing I know ; ‘I know that Messias cometh, who is called Christ ; when he is come, he will tell us all things ;’ deciding every dispute, and rectifying every mistake.”

What this woman says of our Saviour’s appearance in the flesh, we may apply to his glorious return. “Once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation.” Much information he has given us already ; but much he has left in the dark, to try our faith, and to draw forth our desire. Some parts of his word are “hard to be understood :” many of the dispensations of his providence are inexplicable : but “what we know not now, we shall know hereafter.” He is coming to explain. He is coming to “bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and to make manifest the counsels of the hearts ; and then shall every man have praise of God.”

Our Saviour now discloses himself, as the Messiah ; saying, “I that speak unto thee am he.” Never had he before, to any one, so expressly revealed himself. And who is the honored individual to whom the discovery is made ? Caiaphas ? Any of the rulers ? of the Scribes ? of the Pharisees ? He “hides these things from the wise and prudent, and reveals them unto babes.” He would not encourage sin, but he would tell us that the vilest need not despair : he would tell us that often “the last shall be first, and the first last.”

The woman was speaking of the Messiah, but little

did she imagine that she was speaking *to* him. But so it was. And our Lord is often with his people, when they are not aware of it; and many are lamenting his absence, and longing for his presence, when he is communing with them already. How little did the disciples going to Emmaus imagine that he, whose death they were deplored, was talking with them, when a stranger joined their company, and inquired why they were sad. How little did the disciples in the storm imagine, when they saw a spirit and cried out for fear, that it was their deliverer; who immediately said unto them, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." In his solitary flight, how little did Jacob expect to find the ladder, the angels, and God: —but he exclaimed, "Surely the Lord is in this place. This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

If this woman had been told that the Messiah was come, she would have attached something very splendid to him; and had she been told that she should some time or other find him, she never would have expected to meet him as a weary traveller, a beggar of a cup of cold water at a well. "His ways are not our ways." We can hardly think that in such a wreck of our fortune, in such a disappointment, in such a sickness, in such a distress of mind, in such a self-despair, he is there; yet he it is that talketh with us.

Here we must again suspend the thread of the history; and, for the present, conclude with a few additional reflections.

First, Observe the *Omniscience of our Lord;* and bring it home to yourselves. It seems impossible to read

the Gospel, and not be convinced that to him all hearts are open, all desires known, and from him no secret is hid. Though he had never seen this woman before with his bodily eyes, he perfectly knew her history, and her character. And he knows yours. He sees all your actions, hears all your words, observes all your thoughts, and the very "imaginings of your thoughts." And what you have forgotten he has not. It is all recorded in the book of his remembrance; and will hereafter be brought into judgment, before an assembled world: he will "tell you all things that ever you did," and your memory will be found an exact counterpart of its contents.

It will be well if you learn this truth by a present process, however painful it may be: I mean, by a saving conviction of sin now. Some of you do know it by experience. You remember a time when "sin revived." You were "made to possess the iniquities of your youth." Forgotten transgressions were recalled. Things once deemed innocent appeared flagrantly guilty. The Bible seemed alive. His word was "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." You were confident that it was the work of him, "in whose sight all creatures are manifest, and to whose eyes all things are naked and opened." Entering his house, you seemed laid open to the view of the preacher: who described your case as if he had been apprized of it by an invisible witness; yea, you seemed "convinced of all, judged of all; and so, the

secrets of your heart being made manifest, you reported that God was in them of a truth." And did not the relief and consolation which he applied, equally persuade you that this friend is altogether acquainted with your desire and your wants?

Secondly, Let us *Worship the Lord, "in the beauties of holiness."* and in order to this, never forget the information which our Saviour has given us.

It would be an abuse of his meaning, were we to suppose that he intended to discountenance all public and external worship. We are required to glorify God in our body, as well as in our spirit. Under a notion of the spirituality of divine worship, some have made no difference between the Sabbath and other days, and have abandoned the house of God, and all the means of grace. But the form is only condemned when it is unaccompanied with the power. While we are here, we need modes and places of worship; and we ought to be very thankful that we have places in which to worship God.

But let us guard against bigotry and superstition. Let us never exclaim with the Samaritans, or with the Jews, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are we." Let us never limit the Holy One of Israel to temples made with hands. If our lot should be cast where we cannot enjoy public ordinances; or if, by accident or sickness, we are withheld from them, let us not despair of meeting with him in the situations in which we are placed. "I will," says the Apostle, "that men pray everywhere:" and, says the poet,

Where'er we seek thee, thou art found ;
And every place is hallowed ground.

And guard also against formality. Never bring upon yourselves the reproach of “drawing near to God with your mouth, and honoring him with your lips, while your hearts are far from him.” “He looks to the heart.” It is sincerity, it is fervency, which he requires. They are “those who worship him in spirit and in truth, that he seeks to worship him.”

Thirdly, Let us *Inquire whether he has manifested himself to us:* I do not mean in dreams and visions, but by an illumination of the mind. He has been revealed *to us;* has he been revealed *in us?* Do we know him? If we do, he appears “fairer than the children of men.” If we do, like this woman, we shall “show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.”

LECTURE XV.

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

PART III.

Come, see a man, who told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

JOHN, iv. 29, 30.

DIVINE grace in the recovery of sinners is equally necessary and conspicuous. “By grace are we saved through faith; and that not of ourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.”

In the conversion of the woman of Samaria, we have an example of this grace:—an example

First, of its *Freeness*;—in selecting for its object a profligate creature, not only without her desert, but without her desire.

Secondly, of its *Sweetness*;—in having no recourse to violence or terror, but in adopting the most suitable, gentle, and insinuating means to convince and to soften her.

Thirdly, of its *Power*;—in changing her heart, and sanctifying her life: for if there be a disposition more unsusceptible of cure than others; if there be a demon

which more than others, hope despairs of casting out, it is the spirit of impurity: yet she is “a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.”

Fourthly, of its *Effects*;—for here we see grace in its triumph, grace in its glory. No sooner is she enlightened, than she is inflamed; no sooner is she a convert, than she becomes a preacher.

In the preceding Lecture we heard our Saviour explicitly divulging himself to her as the Messiah, of whose coming she had expressed an expectation. But we are left to conjecture how she received this intelligence; for no sooner had he said, “I that speak unto thee am he;” than we are informed that the disciples returned, and as they drew near “marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?”

Here we may inquire, what it was that excited their surprise, or was likely to have offended them? Dr. Lightfoot has produced many (and some of them very absurd) passages, from the Talmud, and other Rabbinical writings, to prove that it was reckoned scandalous for a man of distinction to be seen talking publicly with a female. But, surely the disciples did not feel such a miserable prejudice as this; nor could they be ignorant that the greatest of the Prophets had indulged themselves in female intercourse.

Knowing the nature of their Lord’s conversations, were they surprised that he should speak upon topics so sublime and mysterious to a poor ignorant creature, whom they supposed incapable of understanding him? We should wonder to see an accomplished statesman

or philosopher, stopping to talk with a peasant, or a laborer upon the road ; but the disciples knew the condescension of the Saviour, and his ability to familiarize instruction to the meanest capacity.

Had they any apprehension, then, of her infamy ? And, like the Pharisees, did they imagine that it was incompatible with the sanctity of his character, to hold intercourse with a person of abandoned reputation ?

The case is still more probable and plain. They wondered at his being so friendly with a woman of Samaria ; "for the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans," but viewed them as abhorred of God, and utterly beneath their notice. The disciples, as yet, had little acquaintance with the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, in which "there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female ; for we are all one in Christ Jesus."

However this may be, the character of the persons to whom our Saviour reveals himself, has always scandalized flesh and blood. At one time, it was asked by the Pharisees, "Have any of the rulers believed on him ? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed." At another, "they murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." That the poor and unlearned should receive him, while the rich and the learned rejected him ; that persons, previously wicked and vile, should appear his followers, while those who were admired for their sanctity despised him ; was a ground of offence which his enemies were always magnifying : and the same effect has followed from the same cause, ever since. But if the temper of Jesus be in us, we

shall rather rejoice, that while these things are “ hidden from the wise and prudent, they are revealed unto babes.” “ Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men ; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called ; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise ; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are : that no flesh should glory in his presence.”

If the disciples were astonished at our Saviour’s conversation with the woman, their behavior was dutiful and submissive ; they said nothing, but acquiesced in the rectitude of his procedure. And hence I would remark two things.

The first regards the advice of Solomon, “ If thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth.” A man should make conscience of his thoughts ; but words are worse than mere thoughts ; they dishonor God more ; they show less fear, and less shame ; they are a further effect of sin. Without words, thoughts *say* nothing. Resolve we, therefore, with David, to “ take heed to our ways, that we sin not with our tongue ;” and pray we with him, “ Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth ; keep the door of my lips.”

The other is, to honor our Lord with our reverence and implicit confidence, when we meet with anything

in his conduct that seems inexplicable. We might much oftener understand him than we do, were it not for our prejudices, and pride, and worldly-mindedness; but when it is not in our power, when "his way is in the sea, and his path in deep waters, and his footsteps are not known, then it becomes us to be silent; to remember that he is not bound to give us an account of any of his matters; to bow to those dispensations which we cannot comprehend; not charging him foolishly, but resting on the perfection of his character and his work; assured that the Judge of all the earth will do right; that he does not act arbitrarily, but wisely; that he has reasons for what he is doing, which now satisfy him, and will, when developed, satisfy us.

The woman was doubtless grieved to see the disciples so near at hand, for by their return they broke off the conversation at the most interesting period; at the very moment that the Saviour had acknowledged himself to her. How soon are our sweetest interviews in this world marred or destroyed! It is sweet to hold communion with saints, but sweeter still to have fellowship with the Saviour; and in the devotions of the temple, and in the solitude of the closet, we sometimes say.

While such a scene of sacred joys,
My raptured eyes and soul employs,
Here I could sit and gaze away
A long and everlasting day—

With Peter, finding it "good to be here," we wish to "build tabernacles," and remain. But earth is not heaven. Sinful distractions, worldly connections, law-

ful business and cares, invade and spoil our pleasures; and make us long after a state, where none of these interruptions are possible, but where "we shall be forever with the Lord."

Short as the interview was, our Saviour had effectually gained her heart. "The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, who told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" They are little circumstances, as it were casually dropped, that serve so much to characterize the sacred writers, and to charm and instruct their readers. Such, for instance, is the woman's leaving her waterpot behind her. Nothing could be more natural in the present state of her mind: and three reasons of this action may be given.

First, Perhaps it was from *Kindness to our Lord, and his disciples.* They had purchased food, and they were coming to sit down, to a plain repast; and she leaves them the vessel, for their convenience, to draw and drink. She had in fact denied our Saviour when he asked her only for a draught, but now he is welcome to everything she has.

I admire the simple manners and hospitality of earlier times. See Rebekah. She said to Eliezer, "Drink, my lord: and she hasted, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink." And O! ye, who have the will and not the power to do more, remember who has said, "Whosoever shall give to drink, unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in nowise lose his reward."

Perhaps, *Secondly*, she left it from *Indifference*. Wholly occupied now about greater things, she forgot her errand. The feelings of young converts are often very lively. The novelty and the importance of the objects newly presented to their minds, strike them so forcibly, that, considering human infirmity, it is not to be wondered at, that, for a season at least, they should be wholly engrossed by them, and become too careless of other things. And hence we can sometimes excuse in them, what we should condemn in others. I say, *excuse*; for we do not *justify* ignorance, and imprudence, and rashness. Religion is not designed to draw us off from our callings, or to make us idle in them. A Christian is not to cast away his worldly property, but to be careful of what he has acquired; in order to "provide things honest in the sight of all men," to support his family, and to relieve the distressed. Hence so many warnings are given against suretyship; and hence our Saviour said to his disciples, after the miraculous plenty, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." But those who have found the pearl of great price will have far less regard to worldly things than before. They will "seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;" they will consider themselves as "strangers and pilgrims upon earth;" their "moderation will be known unto all men;" they will not be too much elated with success, or depressed by disappointment; they will be willing to part with all, however dear, when the voice of God demands the sacrifice.

Perhaps, *Finally*; she left it as an *Impediment to*

(*her haste*; willing to lose no time in bearing home the welcome intelligence. Female eagerness conceives and brings forth at once; sees its object one instant, and darts towards it the next. Now, this being sanctified by divine grace, see how this woman acts; see how she improves time. No sooner is her opportunity of *getting* good over, than she seizes an opportunity of *doing* good.

Five things may be remarked.

First, I admire her *Benevolence*.

We often have occasion to observe that an earnest concern for the salvation of our own souls, will be always attended with a disinterested anxiety for the spiritual welfare of others. As soon as Christ had found Philip, “Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the Prophets did write.” As soon as Saul of Tarsus knew Christ, “he straightway preached him in the synagogues, as the Son of God.” David prays for a sense of divine forgiveness upon this very principle: “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.” And so it was with this woman. “I have found him; and now, O! my neighbors, I cannot, I must not conceal it:”—something like the lepers, who had met with plenty while their fellow-citizens were starving; who “said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king’s household.”

Secondly, I admire her *Zeal*.

See how urgent she is. She even begins with a pressing invitation, “Come.” And doubtless, that which made her so urgent, was not only the importance of the case, but the shortness and uncertainty of the season. She hoped, if they would accompany her immediately, to be able to get back before he left the well: “but,” says she, “you have not a moment to lose; I know not how soon he may be gone; and such an opportunity you may never enjoy again.” Her fervor, therefore, was not without reason. And is ours? When we call upon you to “repent and believe the Gospel;” when we urge you to “flee from the wrath to come;” when, assuming the language of entreaty, we say, “Come, for all things are now ready;”—have we nothing to justify earnestness? Is not your danger imminent? Are not your bodies sinking into the grave? Is not your life a vapor? May not “the things which belong to your peace” be suddenly “hid from your eyes”? May not the bridge be down, and the door shut? “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.”

Thirdly, I admire her *Wisdom*.

“Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” “You all acknowledge that Messiah cometh, and that when he is come he will tell us all things. Let him come when he will, he cannot give a stronger proof of his supernatural knowledge than this man has given; who has laid open my present condition, and all my past life.” How striking, how convincing this appeal!

She determines nothing : she only tells them what he has done, and leaves them to draw an inference which she deems unavoidable. She does not, you observe, mention his own declaration, that he was the Christ ; but refers to his doings. This was reasoning properly ; as did our Lord himself upon other occasions ; "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin : but now they have no cloak for their sin." "How forcible are right words!"

Fourthly, I admire her *Honesty*.

She does not say, he has told me everything pertaining to the worship of God ; but "all things that ever I did." Now, if a person knew your faults, you would wish to have him shunned. If a person were to come into your neighborhood, who knew many things to your disgrace and dishonor, you would hardly invite people to go to him : you would rather run him down, that little dependence might be placed upon his testimony. But confession of sin always accompanies saving conversion ; and this woman is not afraid to send her neighbors to one who knew all her vileness ; and could reveal it to them, as he had done to herself.

Fifthly, I admire her *Courage*.

It was no small trial, for a plain and wicked woman to go openly, and address the inhabitants of the place where she lived, and was perhaps well known, upon a religious subject. I see the populace crowding around her, as she passes from house to house, and from street to street. Some reproach her with

her former crimes : some mock her as usurping the teacher's office : some say, she is beside herself. But she is not to be intimidated or diverted.

It is good to see attention awakened ; a stir made even by anything. Something will surely come of this. Some are astonished, and hardly know what to do. Some have their curiosity excited, and they wish to know more of this strange occurrence. Some have their affections moved, and they follow her, looking at her and weeping ; and exclaiming, "Who can help feeling ? There must be something in this : how earnest, how serious she appears ; and how well she argues—we will go." "Then they went out of the city, and came unto him."

But their interview with our Saviour, and his beautiful discourse with his disciples, while they were on their way to him, over the fields, must be reserved for another Lecture.

We now conclude, with observing ;

1. *What a real and wonderful change does conversion always accomplish.* Peculiar circumstances may attend the conversion of one, which are dispensed with in the conversion of another, but the substance is the same ; and there is the same necessity for it ; for what our Lord said to Nicodemus, he says to all ; "Ye must be born again." The work is not in all equally striking ; in some it is more gradual and insensible in the operation ; but there is always an effect which decides the state, and gives a new bias to the character ; and the subject of it is made to differ not only from others, but also from himself.

2. *Divine grace is not an inoperative principle.*

As the sun no sooner rises than it shines, and as fire is no sooner kindled than it burns, so grace acts as soon as it exists. Well did our Saviour say, that it is in us, "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." It is full of energy and power. We read of "the work of faith; the labor of love, the patience of hope :" to each of these graces, something active is ascribed.

3. *Behold an apology for what some would deem officiousness.* How often do you hear, as soon as any attempt is made to bring people to seriousness ; "Pray do not intermeddle with us. Go to heaven your own way, and leave us to go ours. Be as religious as you please, but keep your religion to yourselves." But this is enjoining on Christians an impossibility. "If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." And as they cannot, so they ought not to refuse such office of love. Only a Cain will ask, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Certainly you are. Are you not bound, "as you have opportunity, to do good unto all men"? If we are required to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to heal the sick, are we not much more bound to save the soul in the day of the Lord Jesus? Is not zeal important in proportion to the value of its object? Is time to be compared with eternity ? Is not charity to the soul, the soul of charity ?

4. *Be persuaded to resemble this woman.* Endeavor to diffuse the savor of the Redeemer's knowledge, and to bring souls to Christ. She was as unqualified as you are to publish the Saviour: and she was under no greater obligation than yourselves.

Let me tell you that you are all bound to preach Christ; not by assuming the ministerial office, but "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." On a father it is incumbent to preach Christ to his children: on a master, to his servants; on friends, to friends; and on neighbors, to neighbors.

It is absurd to complain of want of opportunities and means. Much is in your power; much more than you are willing to allow. You may be useful by prayer, by example, by lovely tempers, by words fitly spoken. Where is the individual who may not be serviceable by inviting others, especially his own connections, to those means of grace which he has found a blessing to himself? Even by a single attendance on a gospel ministry, prejudices may be removed, and some serious impressions made: "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Thus Cornelius called together his kinsmen and friends, when the Apostle Peter was coming to tell him words by which he was to be saved. And this shall be the case when the glory of the Gospel shall revive, and the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth. "Many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

I fear we all stand condemned by the example of this woman. We have not sought occasions of doing good. We have neglected advantages when they have come in our way. But while we are all guilty, shall I say there is one class on whom the censure falls

with peculiar force? Let me explain myself. Have any of you been not only called by grace, but converted from a state of profligacy, like this poor wretch? *You* ought to be very zealously affected in the discharge of this duty. Your obligation is enforced by gratitude; for having had much forgiven, you should love much: and also by justice; for as you have injured others, you should proportionably labor to benefit them. How painful is the thought that some are now in hell, who owe their destination to your errors and vices; but some are still in the land of the living. Oh! hasten, like this woman; and endeavor to bring back those whom, by your influence or example, you have led astray. Go, and tell them what God has done for your souls. "I was once in the same state with you, but the grace of God has dispelled the darkness that enveloped me, broken the chains that enslaved me, and subdued the passions and lusts which tormented me. Like you, I regarded as folly and madness the concerns of eternity, but now I see the wisdom of supremely regarding them. Like you, I thought that it was impossible to forsake sin, but now I find it delightful. Instead of disgust and misery, as I feared, I have found pleasure and peace. I no longer ask, 'Who will show me any good?' God is my father, death is my friend, heaven is my home; and in a world full of changes, 'I am careful for nothing.' And O! that I could lay open my heart! O! that you could feel what I feel, and see what I see!"

'Thus bear your testimony. If you are not successful, your endeavors will be accepted. But "if

he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." And why may not *you* expect this incomparable reward? Let this woman encourage you. Who knows how many she was the means of saving? Perhaps more than any one of the Apostles before the day of Pentecost.

LECTURE XVI.

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

PART IV.

Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.—JOHN, iv. 35.

WHAT a surprising difference is there between human and divine agency. In the workmanship of man, a thousand movements are often necessary to produce one effect; while in the work of God, a thousand effects spring from one movement. We know that an event occurs at such a time, and in such a place; but who can determine how widely it will extend its operation, or how long it will continue its influence? When Luther began to preach against indulgences, not an angel could imagine the entire result of consequences, intellectual, civil, moral, and religious.

One thing we may observe, that in all God does for man, whether in Providence or in Grace, he looks beyond the individual himself, and has a reference to

others. We are blessed, in order that we may be blessings. What we receive, we are also to dispense. Are we rich? We are to be "ready to distribute, willing to communicate." Are we enlightened? We are to "arise, and shine." Are we comforted? It is "that we may be able to comfort them who are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." Are we converted? We are to "strengthen our brethren."

As all the Lord's people are safe, so we believe that none of them are wholly useless. But it is in grace as it is in nature. Christians are called "the good seed of the kingdom." Drop a single grain of corn into the earth; this will propagate, and produce many more; and in time, a sufficiency will be furnished to enrich all the neighboring fields. Thus, one Christian produces another; till, in some cases, a whole district or community is evangelized; and the words of Isaiah are accomplished; "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God."

And thus it was, in a measure, with this Samaritan woman, and her fellow-citizens.

Our Saviour's conversation at the well properly consists of two parts: his discourse with the woman, in the absence of the disciples; and his discourse with the disciples, in the absence of the woman. Both were admirably suited to the state and circumstances of the

persons addressed ; and serve, also, to show how much *he* redeemed the time, who never lived an idle hour, nor spoke an idle word.

We have seen the woman withdraw, in order to invite her neighbors to come and see the Messiah, whom she herself had discovered. While she is engaged in persuading them, and in returning with them, our Saviour had an opportunity to deliver an address to his disciples, in which he shows his own satisfaction in seeking and saving that which was lost, and stimulating them to similar zeal. They had just come back from the city, whither they had gone to buy meat ; and, knowing that their Master stood in need of refreshment, they spread it before him ; and perceiving that he did not seem disposed to partake of it, they pressed him : “they prayed him, saying, Master, eat.” But even this was in vain. “He said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.” The disciples, mistaking him concerning the meat as much as the woman had misunderstood him concerning the water, said among themselves, “Hath any man brought him ought to eat ? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.”

Was his present refusal of food, from a loss or lack of appetite ? Had the pleasure he now enjoyed raised him above the sensation of hunger ? “We are fearfully and wonderfully made ;” and as we know not fully the power the body has over the mind, so we know not the power the mind has over the body. Moses lived forty days and forty nights without food, when he communed with God in Horeb ; and the same is recorded of Elijah. I know that in these instances

there was something miraculous ; but I know also that, in many cases, when the mind has been very vigorously and intensely engaged, the body has been rendered insensible to outward impressions, and even unsusceptible of fatigue and pain. If a mother saw her child drowned ; and if, by the application of proper means, suspended animation were restored ; however hungry she was before, she would now feel little inclination for food. She has food of another kind. “This her son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found.”

Our Saviour was a partaker of human nature, and no comparison will bear a comparison with his. Need we wonder, therefore, that occupied as his mind now was in prayer and in praise, in meditation, in reflection on what was past, in expectation of what was future, and in surveying all the happy and glorious results ; —need we wonder that he should feel this indifference to food ?

But his present refusal was to be instructive and exemplary. We will suppose that he still hungered, and could have eaten with a relish ;—but he would teach us a comparative indifference to things in themselves lawful and necessary ; he would teach us self-denial in doing good ; he would teach us that we must have a keener appetite for our duty than even for our food.

Abraham’s servant, though pressed, would not eat till he had told his errand. Samuel, though urged, would not sit down till he had anointed David. Our Lord, though entreated, would not partake of food till he had done his present work. “I have called,”

says he, "by my grace, that poor woman you saw leaving the well; and many of her neighbors, moved by her entreaties, are coming to receive the words of eternal life. Such business as this I long for more than food; and I find it more reviving and refreshing." Is this our case? "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." There are some who find the service of God to be rather their medicine than their meat. They take it, but with reluctance; and they would gladly be excused, did they not fear disease and death. But, though food is necessary to life, no one thinks of eating from a sense of duty; it is found our pleasure. So it is in religion, when the heart is right with God. Duties are no longer performed as tasks, but are enjoyed as privileges. Having "the same mind in them that was also in Christ Jesus," they are cheerful givers, they "receive the word with joy," they "come before his presence with thanksgiving," they "call the sabbath a delight," and "none of his commandments are grievous."

Two advantages, in particular, result from this disposition. *First*, it renders our services well pleasing to God; for he looketh to the heart; and he will even pass by mistakes and imperfections in the execution, when he finds that our "desire is to his name." "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." "It is well that it was in thine heart."

And, *Secondly*, this carries us through difficulties and dangers, which would otherwise drive us back, or turn us aside. You see this in those professors of

religion whose convictions and inclinations do not harmonize. After a while their heterodox hearts prove too much for their orthodox heads; and inconsistencies are followed by neglect and apostacy. But it is otherwise with those who "cleave unto the Lord with purpose of heart." Like Caleb, they "follow him fully." There is no pursuing worldly business with success, unless the heart be engaged in it; and it is in religion, as it is in everything else; only indeed the case is stronger, because the sacrifices required are infinitely greater.

After expressing his own regard to the work that was given him to do, our Saviour stimulates his disciples to similar zeal. For this purpose, he employs three arguments, all borrowed from husbandry.

The *First* is taken from the *Necessity for their Exertion*. When the grain is ripe, the sickle must be thrust in. The crop will soon perish, unless gathered in and secured; and as the season is short, and the consequences are important, every other concern is expected to give place to the reapers' toil. Now, so it is here. You say, "There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest;" and you say well, for so it is. It does want so much time to the natural harvest; but not to the spiritual,—the harvest of souls. This is now: this is arrived. "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." Consider the dispositions of people in general; and particularly, the multitude of Samaritans coming over yonder plain, and who are now within view.

This is instructive, and teaches us that when atten-

tion is awakened, and numbers press to hear, it is a favorable opening, an opportunity which should excite and encourage diligence; and that we should often lift up our eyes, and contemplate such appearances for this purpose; watching the leadings of Providence; and suiting ourselves to present duty.

The *Second* is taken from the *Profitableness of their Exertion*. The reaper is well paid. An attempt to defraud him is mentioned as one of the most provoking sins. “Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them who have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.” The husbandman is more than commonly liberal at harvest time. Even those who go by, say, “The blessing of the Lord be upon you: we bless you in the name of the Lord.” “He that reapeth, receiveth wages:” and “*your* labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.”

What the reaper gathers in, is valuable; it is the staff of life. But the natural life is all that it can sustain and preserve; while *you* labor for the everlasting salvation of precious souls, *you* “gather fruit unto life eternal.”

When the harvest is over a feast is provided, and all the servants partake of the festivity, who contributed in any way, whether by preparing the soil, or securing the produce. So here: “He that soweth and he that reapeth will rejoice together.” The Lord’s servants have varied in their capacities, offices, usefulness; but all were employed in the same cause; they all had a relation to each other; and when they meet together there will be no envy, no contempt.

O blessed harmony ! Here, one lays the foundation, and another builds the superstructure ; one plants, and another waters ; one sows, and another reaps ; “but all these, worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will ;” and in heaven, God will be “all in all.”

The *Third* is taken from the *Facility of their Exertion* ; the work being prepared to their hands. There is a common saying, to the effect that men often obtain advantages for which others have toiled : “One soweth, and another reapeth :” and “this,” said the Saviour, “is true of you.” “I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor : other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors.” He does not mean, in the present instance only, having put everything in a train for the conversion of the Samaritans in their absence, and without their concurrence or knowledge : but more generally ; many previous, but necessary parts of their work, were already accomplished ; they had the best, the richest part ; they had to gather in, and treasure up. But the Prophets, and other holy men ; Moses, and John, whose office it was to “prepare the way of the Lord ;” these, though they had little success themselves, were by no means useless in the end. They raised an expectation of the Messiah, and described so fully his person, and his work, and his sufferings, that the Apostles only preached what they had prophesied. Conceive of these disciples going forth without any former revelation, without any previous dispensation, without the labors of those who had gone before them ; and you will find that their difficulties would have been increased a hundred-fold.

And this will apply to us, still more strongly. How have the Apostles aided us? Yea, what advantages have we derived from uninspired men, since their days? What reason have we to bless God for their writings? How much labor and study have their toils and researches saved us? What ought we to feel for the translation of the Bible into our own tongue; and for liberty to use it? What do we owe to their sufferings? They “resisted unto blood, striving against sin;” and by the loss of their lives, procured for us civil and religious liberty. I pass over the numberless discoveries and improvements, of our predecessors, in the arts and sciences, which have contributed so exceedingly to our accommodation and comfort. Surely, “other men have labored, and we have entered into their labors.”

This suggests a twofold reflection. Men may be useful, though their success may not appear till after their death:—this should *encourage*. The usefulness with which we are sometimes honored is more derived from others than from ourselves; it is perhaps in answer to the prayers, or in consequence of the diligence of our predecessors:—this should *humble*.

But from this discourse of our Lord addressed to his disciples, we return to the history. The woman and her attendants now draw near. As the result of her labor, “many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him, for the saying of the woman, who testified, He told me all that ever I did.”

“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” It is obvious that with all readiness of mind they received her testimony: they were open

to conviction : and this easiness of belief, which many would have condemned as weak credulity, is far more acceptable to God than those hesitations and cautions, which often deserve the name of cavillings, and which, under the pretence of honoring reason, really flow from the pride of unbelief. We must "receive the kingdom of God as a little child; or we can in nowise enter therein."

Two evidences they gave of their faith. The one was that they "came unto him." The other was that, so far from being scandalized with the meanness of his condition and appearance, "they besought him that he would tarry with them." How natural was this! There is no greater proof of the reality of our conversion, than desires after the presence of Christ. Their request was founded on three principles, and each of them was an evidence of something good.

First, they were eager to give him entertainment ; and if any difference could arise among them it would be, who should have the honor and happiness to lodge him ? So it was with Lydia ; the opening of her door attended the opening of her heart ; and she said, "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained them."

Secondly, they wished to be instructed by him, more perfectly. It is the nature of grace to wish its increase.

Thirdly, they hoped that he would be useful to those of their families and of their neighbors who had been either unable or unwilling to come.

And does he refuse them? Did he ever refuse

the prayer of the destitute? It is worthy of our remark, that he always answers prayer with regard to his presence, whether it be for its removal, or for its enjoyment. He had entered the country of the Gaddarenes, and had cured two demoniacs. This should have made the inhabitants thankful. But, though he had delivered their neighbors, he had destroyed their swine; and therefore "they came and besought him to depart out of their coasts;" and he complied; he sailed to the other side of the lake. And thus, when he comes as a reprobate, by friends, by ministers, by afflictions, by conscience; if, instead of forsaking your sins, you feel his rebukes irksome, and long to be free, he will withdraw, saying, "He is joined to idols; let him alone." But when the disciples were going to Emmaus, having reached "the village, whither they went, he made as if he would have gone further;" but when "they constrained him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent; he went in to tarry with them." And thus he abode with the Samaritans "two days;" two happy days, given in answer to prayer, and employed in usefulness.

For we read, "Many more believed because of his own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Those who had chosen to remain in the city, uninfluenced by the testimony of the woman, are convinced by the declaration of our Lord himself. All are not called at the same time, or by the same means. There is a remarkable diversity in the circumstances.

And even those who had believed in him for the saying of the woman, were more confirmed and establish by his own word ; for there are various degrees in the divine life, and the confidence of the Christian grows by evidence. And there is such a thing as experience, or an acquaintance with divine things derived from trial, in addition to testimony, which is peculiarly satisfactory. We do not rest upon report only, not even the report of inspired men. We know assuredly, by actual trial, that “it is good to draw near to God;” that by “believing we enter into rest;” that while “in the world we have tribulation, in the Saviour we have peace;” we have “the witness in ourselves.” And soon, faith of every kind will be lost in sight ; and we shall say with the Queen of Sheba, “It was a true report which I heard in mine own land : but now I have come, and mine eyes have seen, and, behold, the half was not told me.”

What a time of refreshing was this ! What a work of God was here ! Let me conclude by calling upon you to observe, who were the *subjects* of this work, and who was the *instrument*.

First, the subjects were Samaritans, not Jews : and we may exclaim with our Lord, on another occasion, We “have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.” “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” In no one of his own towns or villages, did he ever meet with such a reception as from these Samaritans, who were deemed by the Jews, “the filth and the offscouring of all things.” “What shall we say then ? That the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the

righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone: as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone and a rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."

While the example of the Samaritans condemned the Jews, it served to show, how very contrary to human expectations the grace of the Gospel is; so that often, the last are first, and the first last: and to afford an earnest and a pledge of the extension of divine grace to all nations, indiscriminately; indicating that soon there was to be "no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Secondly, the *instrument* was, not a philosopher, not an Apostle armed with tongues and miracles, but *a poor, wicked, but converted woman*. And "who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him" what means he shall employ to accomplish the purposes of his grace? The weaker the instrument, the more does "the excellency of the power" appear to be "of God." Hence, in the variety of instruments he employs, he often takes those that, to carnal apprehension, seem the most unfit and unlikely. When the people of Jericho found their city attacked with rams'-horns, instead of battering machines, they were no doubt

ready to laugh them to scorn ; but, down went the walls ! The greatest of all the Apostles had been the greatest persecutor ; and he “ preached the faith that once he destroyed.” How wonderful that this woman should not only be saved herself, but should become the means of saving many others ; coming to the well a sinner, and returning a preacher, and more successful than any of the Apostles before the day of Pentecost.

In another view, there is often a suitableness in such instruments as these. “ Having much forgiven, they love much.” The change wrought in them is more striking and unquestionable than in others, and awakens inquiry. They can speak upon divine subjects from experience, and what comes from the heart is most likely to reach the heart. They can sympathize with such as are in spiritual distress, and “ know how to speak a word in season.” They can warn others of false confidences, and lead them to a Saviour, of whose grace they have not only heard, but tasted.

What singular honor has been conferred upon this woman ! She was useful not only by her active, but (if I may be allowed the expression) by her passive instrumentality. How many have been awakened, how many encouraged, how many edified, by reading, or by hearing the narrative of her conversion ! Oh ! that similar effects may be found to have resulted from that consideration of her history, which we now with reluctance close.

LECTURE XVII.

L Y D I A .

And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women who resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.—ACTS, xvi. 13, 14, 15.

HISTORY, it is said, is philosophy teaching by example. All history is interesting and useful. It enlarges our views of Providence; increases our acquaintance with human nature; and saves us, by the experience of others, from many evils in our own.

But the history of the church is far superior to that of the world. It regards the soul and eternity, the wonders of the cross, the triumphs of the Gospel, and the principles which prepare Christians for all their “high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

. And yet no history has ever been written so exceptionally, or has displayed so much of the prejudices

and depravity of human nature. Hence, a powerful writer has been induced to pronounce it “one long-continued lie.”

But from this sweeping sentence, we are sure there is one portion of ecclesiastical history perfectly free. It is the Acts of the Apostles, written by Luke “the beloved physician,” and under divine inspiration. To a passage of this history your attention is now called.

“And on the Sabbath we went out of the city,” (Philippi, the chief city of that part of Macedonia,) “by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women who resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.”

Philippi was built by Philip, the father of Alexander the Great. This rendered it noted from the beginning. In after times it became more famous, on account of two sanguinary battles which the Romans fought in its plains; in one of which Julius Cæsar vanquished Pompey, and in the other Augustus defeated Brutus and Cassius.

“Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood:” and it is painful to review the scenes of misery and destruction which proclaim the exploits of the hero. But thy victories, O Jesus, are all thine own. Thou art the

“Prince of Peace.” Thy people are made “willing in the day of thy power;” but they are subdued by love; and they are conquered only to be made “free indeed.”

In the words we have chosen as the subjects of this lecture, let us consider,

I. THE OCCASION.

And II. THE OPERATION.

I. THE OCCASION is thus expressed. “On the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women who resorted thither.”

Observe, *First, The Season*: “the Sabbath.”

“The Sabbath was made for man:”—not indeed exclusively. It had a merciful reference even to the brute creation; and if the beasts were possessed of reason, they would be thankful for such an appointment. And who does not rejoice to hear the Father of all his creatures say, “On the seventh day thou shalt rest, that thine ox and thine ass may rest,” as well as thou?

But the Sabbath was peculiarly designed for man. It was intended to favor him corporeally, and as to his outward estate. In this view, the Sabbath may be of little value to some of you; but it is otherwise with those who have to toil at the loom, to dig in the mine, to smite at the forge, and gain their daily bread by the sweat of their brow. Who could bear everlasting drudgery and fatigue?

But if the Sabbath be valuable as it contributes to the relief, the cleanliness, and the health of the body; it has higher claims on a moral ground, and as it regards the interests of the soul. It is almost the only time which the poor and laboring classes have for instruction and devotion; and if the Sabbath were abolished, it is easy to see in what a state of ignorance and barbarism the multitude would soon be found.

This season is peculiarly "the accepted time, and the day of salvation." It is commonly the day in which the sinner is awakened, and brought to "seek those things that are above;" and to "choose that good part, which shall not be taken away from him." And it is not only the season in which the greater part of the people of God are called by divine grace, but it is also that in which by "waiting upon Him, their strength is renewed," and they find Him "in his palaces for a refuge:" and though many are ready to say, "what a weariness is it to serve the Lord; when will the Sabbath be gone, that we may sell corn?" *they* "call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable;" and find "a day in his courts better than a thousand."

Observe *Secondly, The Place.* "By a river side, where prayer was wont to be made."

God seldom receives anything more than external and ceremonial homage, from those whose attachment to particular places leads them to exclaim, "the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are we." Nothing renders a people dear to God but their conformity to him; and

nothing makes a place of worship sacred but the divine presence. As to external holiness, all places are alike to him who has said, "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?" He "dwelleth not in temples made with hands."

Where'er we seek him he is found,
And every place is hallowed ground

"I will," says the apostle, "that men pray *everywhere*, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." Nathanael found him under the fig tree; Paul, on board the ship, in the hurricane; Jeremiah, in the dungeon; and Jacob, when in exile, and with no building near him, exclaimed, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Let those remember this who by the Providence of God are removed into a locality of spiritual destitution; and those, also, who by accident or disease are deprived of temple privileges. The God of all grace is always near; and in the house of mourning, or the lonely walk; in a field of standing corn, or by a river side, can enable you to "see his power and glory so as you have seen him in the *sanctuary*."

But you need not imagine that this company held their meeting abroad, in the open air. The Jews, besides their synagogues, had small houses in retired situations, where, free from noise and disturbance, they could enjoy occasional devotion, either alone, or with any of their connections. Because of the use

to which they were appropriated, they were called *Proseuchæ*, or places of prayer. To one of these our Saviour himself repaired, as when it is said “that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God:” that is, as rendered by Dr. Campbell and others, “he continued all night in an oratory, or proseucha.”

Such a provision there was here, “by a river side;” called a place “where prayer was wont to be made.” And such a provision was a desirable and valuable privilege, where persons wished to indulge their feelings of devotion in reading, meditation, prayer, or pious discourse. By the power of association, the place would serve to impress the mind, while the end for which it was consecrated would tend to restrain their thoughts from diversion.

And where there are no such express provisions to accommodate and excite, since the advantages are otherwise attainable, we wonder that Christians do not practise retirement more. It is in solitude that we gain the knowledge of ourselves, and are loosened from the influence of the world, and find it “good to draw near to God,” and (as an old writer says) “have God to ourselves.” Had we resided at Philippi, I trust we should have been often at the river side, not only as a scene of pleasant relaxation, but as a place “where prayer was wont to be made.”

Observe *Thirdly, The Company.* “We sat down, and spake unto the *Women* who resorted thither.” We do not read of any men, and perhaps there were none present. It has often been remarked that women are more numerous and more regular in attend-

ance, in our public and social assemblies, than men : and though (if they do possess and display a superior regard to divine things), we are far from intimating that their devotion is derived from them, yet there are, in their case, circumstances and advantages that materially befriend and promote it. Their sphere of action is less exposed to temptation ; their natural susceptibility is greater ; they are under more habitual restraints ; they are called to exercise more self-denial ; and the vicissitudes through which they pass, and the perils they may endure, are adapted to awaken dependence upon God, and to revive and preserve thoughts of another world.

And is it not surprising that women can ever countenance irreligion or infidelity ? Is there a writer of this class that has ever done justice to their claims ? or that has ascribed to them any other honor than that which results from subjection and subserviency ? There is no book which females are so bound to regard and honor as the Scriptures. It is there alone that they appear not only as lovely, but as reasonable and immortal beings ; as "heirs together" with us "of the grace of life ;" personally responsible ; eminent in usefulness ; and often peculiarly honored of God.

Observe *Fourthly, The Preaching.* "We sat down, and spake unto the women who resorted thither." We are not informed of the subject of their discourse ; but it is not difficult to conjecture what it was, since each of the speakers had "determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified ;" and no other subject was ever honored as "the minis-

tration of the spirit," and "the power of God to salvation."

It is likely that this subject was never heard in that place before; and how was it received and treated? As all the audience were females, there was no violence or indecorum; but it is probable that some wondered, and that others said, "we should like to hear again of this matter." We know not how many were present, but we only read of one who was made "wise unto salvation." Perhaps no sermon was ever useful to all the hearers. This was not the case even with Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost; for while three thousand were "pricked in their heart," "some mocked;" and the reflection of the Apostle is as true as it is awful; that while to some "we are the savor of life unto life," to others "we are the savor of death unto death." Much seed is sown; but some falls "by the way side," and some "upon stony places," and some "among thorns;" while one-fourth only falls "into good ground;" and even this yields only in very unequal proportions.

But this should not discourage us; as, *First*, It will not be always so; for "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you." "His name shall endure forever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed." And, *Secondly*, The salvation of *one* individual is of such unspeakable importance, that we are

assured it causes “joy in the presence of the angels of God ;” and success, though in only a single instance, should always be regarded as an abundant reward. “Know that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”

From the *Occasion*, let us pass to consider,

II. THE OPERATION here accomplished.

It was exemplified in the experience of Lydia. “A certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God, heard us : whose heart the Lord opened, and she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.”

Several particulars are here mentioned concerning her, all of which are worthy of our notice, because they have the signature of the Holy Ghost stamped upon them.

First, Her Employment. She was a “seller of purple.” She had, therefore, an occupation ; and was not one of those of whom the Apostle speaks ; “idle, wandering about from house to house ; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not.” Trade is respectable, and as Bishop Sanderson remarks, “nothing is so disgraceful as beggary, and shabby gentility.” The Jews always gave their children a calling ; and they had among

them a proverb, that “he who brings up a son without a trade, teaches him to steal.” Seneca declared, “I had rather be sick, than be idle.” And truly has Dr. Watts said,

For Satan finds some mischief still,
For idle hands to do.

In vain will any allege business as an excuse for irreligion; for they will hereafter find that persons, placed in the same circumstances, and liable to the same temptations with themselves, have been followers of the Lord Jesus, and “have not defiled their garments.”

The question has more than once been agitated, whether it is lawful for professors of religion to carry on businesses which have pride, not utility; luxury, not necessity, for their object. Lydia does not appear to have relinquished her employment; and if she continued it, she would doubtless expect encouragement from her fellow disciples; such as Paul recommended to the Romans in behalf of Phœbe; “that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you.” But the first Christians used little purple: they were commonly poor; and the less that modern professors adorn themselves, the better. Their Lord and Saviour was but once attired in purple; and then it was in mockery and scorn.

Secondly, The Place of her Extraction. She was “of the city of Thyatira.” This was a great way from Philippi. How came she here? By bereavement? or friendship? or marriage? or business?

We cannot determine this; but here she now resided. And there are not many in this “vain life, which we spend as a shadow,” who continue in one place. How few are there who die where they were born; or even settle permanently where they were brought up.

The events leading to their removal often seem very casual; and they are so as to the individuals themselves; but they are divinely known, arranged, and determined. The Lord fixes “the bounds of their habitation:” and with regard to his own people, the disposals of his Providence are in subserviency to the designs of his Grace. The man says, “I will go into such a city and buy, and sell, and get gain;” and he goes; and he finds there, though he never looked after it, “the pearl of great price.” In his new situation, by curiosity, or example, or invitation, he is induced to hear “the joyful sound,” and his feet are turned into the path of peace. Many, when they look back on life, will know, that had it not been for such or such an occurrence, they would have remained in places where they might have been corrupted and destroyed. It was a blessed change which brought Lydia from Thyatira to Philippi.

Thirdly, Her Character. She “worshipped God.” She is, therefore, very distinguishable from her fellow convert, whose case is recorded in the same chapter. It is more than probable that the jailer of Philippi was rude, profane, and vicious. He was cruel towards the Apostles, and was about to commit murder on himself. But Lydia was a proselyte; of moral deportment, and amiable disposition.

The grace of God is infinitely free; and accordingly, we sometimes find it operating on individuals the most unlikely; and even publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of God before Scribes and Pharisees. So when the Apostle, writing to the Corinthians, enumerates a dreadful catalogue of sinners, he adds, “and such were some of you:” *some*, but *not all*. No: some are called who were distinguished by previous moral and unblameable conduct. This seems to have been the case with many, if not all, of the twelve Apostles; this was the case with Cornelius, and with Timothy; and this, likewise, was the case with Lydia.

Some talk as if they imagined they had a kind of advantage in having been converted and saved from a state of profligacy; especially as to decision and evidence. But sin is a bad business, and it is a mercy to have been preserved from it, in every kind and degree: and one peculiar advantage arises from having been moral before we became spiritual, namely, the avoiding of the injuries which sin does to others, by influence and example; and which, when converted ourselves, we cannot repair, but must lament all our days. Let none, therefore, think the less of a work of grace on this account. Such a conversion may be less visible, but is not less real: indeed it is not less visible with regard to God, who looks to the heart.

I do not like the notion that we are all to do something, or acquire something, as a condition of divine grace. All good is from God, the dawn as well as the day. But there is an order in the Lord’s operations, so that he crowns grace with grace, and

"to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly." "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these." "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

Observe, therefore, *Fourthly, Her Attendance.* She "heard us;" meaning, at this time and place: she was one of the present assembly. What induced her to be there on this occasion, whether invitation, or curiosity, or the working of conscience, we know not; but she could say, as Abraham's servant did, "I being in the way, the Lord led me." It is well to be at the pool, "waiting for the troubling of the water." Whatever brings persons under the preaching of the word is to be viewed with thankfulness, as an encouragement of hope: for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God:" and "blessed are the people that" (even in this sense) "know the joyful sound." Sin entered by the ear, and so does grace. Listening to the devil, we fell: hearkening unto God, we rise. "Hear, and your soul shall live."

Fifthly, The Change she experienced. "Whose heart the Lord opened." What does this imply, but that her heart was before shut?—Shut, as ice shuts up the water that it cannot flow.—Shut, as the miser shuts up his bowels of compassion from the poor.—Shut, as a door is shut to keep the house from the entrance of the owner. This is our Saviour's own image: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock:

if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

The heart of man is naturally averse to religion; and nothing, either pleasing or awful, can induce an attention to it: Yea, "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." But when the heart is opened, this aversion is removed; our duty becomes our delight; and we are made "ready to every good work to do his will."

But we here see not only the *nature* of this change, but the *author* of it: "whose heart *the Lord* opened." Yes, whatever be the instrument, he is the agent. "It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." The state of human nature is such as to require the Almighty to "work in us, both to will and to do;" and we are expressly informed, that every saved sinner is "his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." An operation is required, to effect which is above the power of education, example, and moral suasion. But nothing is too hard for the Lord. He who made us knows our frame. He has immediate access to our spirits. The heart is under his dominion and agency; and "what he has promised, he is able also to perform." "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. 'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I

will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." If this promise has been fulfilled in your happy experience, you will have no objection to give him the glory of the work. And if you are desirous of being the subjects of it, your hope here meets with every encouragement. "Ask," says he, "and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

Finally, Observe the Evidences she gave of the Reality of her Conversion. They were three. Let us consider them.

1st, Her regard to the divine teachings. "She attended unto the things which were spoken by Paul." If some are called without the direct and obvious instrumentality of the word of God, they always evince the divinity of their calling, by their attraction and attention to that word, as soon as they have it in their power. They are sure to love it, to read it, to hear it, and to "*attend* to the things which are spoken"—to attend to them seriously, prayerfully, and with application to themselves.

Thus did Lydia; and, therefore,

The 2d evidence was, Her readiness to Dedicate herself entirely to the Lord, in a Profession of his Name. "She was baptized, and her household."

A profession of religion, without the reality, is nothing; but we are not only to be Christians, but to appear such "With the heart," indeed, "man believeth unto righteousness;" but "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Experience is desirable and necessary; but our "light is to shine

before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven." Had the martyrs concealed the truths they embraced, they could not have been witnesses for God, nor have glorified him by their sufferings and deaths. Lydia, by her submission to the ordinance of baptism, proclaimed herself a Christian.

And you will observe, she did this *immediately*, without consulting with flesh and blood; and also without reserve; *relatively*, as well as *personally*; devoting her whole family in the sacred rite; and thus saying, with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

The 3d evidence was, *The Pressing Solicitation she gave to the Apostles*. "She besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us." If this be viewed as expressive of her desire to gain more spiritual improvement from them, and to have her household blessed by them, even this was a token for good.

But it was also an instance and a proof of her liberality. She was willing to "minister to the necessities of the saints;" and "given to hospitality;" not deeming it "a great thing," as she had received of their "spiritual things, that they should reap her carnal things."

And here was more than liberality. Her conduct was the result of that affection for the servants of the Most High God, which she now felt. Like begets like, and attracts like. "By this we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the

brethren : and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

It also displayed her pious fortitude. To perceive this, you must look back, and remember that at this time, Christians were a "sect everywhere spoken against." To harbor these men was, therefore, the way, if not to endanger her dwellings, to have her name cast out as evil ; and to be denounced as countenancing and entertaining disturbers, who came to "turn the world upside down ;" men who were regarded as enemies to Moses, and rebels against Cæsar. But all this she nobly braved, and proved that she was willing to go forth to the despised Galilean, "without the camp, bearing his reproach ;" and if not herself a sufferer, resolved to be a "companion of them that were so used."

It would seem she had some difficulty in persuading them to comply with her invitation and request ; and why were they reluctant ? Was it from delicacy ? Were they afraid of being burdensome to a young convert ? Or were they desirous of showing that, with regard to their followers, they sought not theirs, but them ?

But considering their refusal as a seeming want of confidence in her sincerity, she would take no denial : "and she constrained us." Nor was this the only instance of her hospitality. Her dwelling seems to have been their home, while they were at Philippi ; for after their casting out a spirit of divination, their imprisonment, the conversion of the jailer, and the defeat of the magistrates who would have thrust them out privily, we read, "they went out of the prison,

and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed." Happy Lydia, to be honored and favored with such guests as Paul and Silas! But how short, how interrupted were these delightful visits; as brief as they were blessed! We must not expect on earth the joys of heaven.

Instead of a general application,—which has indeed been made all through the preceding lecture,—we shall conclude with a question, which we address to all your consciences in the sight of God. Has the change of which we have been speaking been effected in your experience? **HAS THE LORD OPENED YOUR HEART?**

Let me beseech you not to elude the question, as unimportant. It is of everlasting moment to each of you; since the faithful witness has said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.—Ye must be born again."

Nor suppose the question incapable of being decided. Such a change must produce effects and evidences. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit." "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." Compare yourselves with those who are described in the Scriptures as "new creatures." Place yourselves in the condition of Lydia, and see how far you are like-minded with her.

Where the heart is shut, religion is a thing standing without. Its duties are only externally regarded, and dragged through as tasks. But when the heart

is open, all is open ; open to the Saviour, open to his people, open to his poor, open to his ministers, open to his cause. And now, his "yoke is easy," his "burden is light," and his "service is perfect freedom." The blessed convert, "whose heart the Lord has opened," is "upheld by a free Spirit," and with "enlarged heart he runs in the way of God's commandments;" "runs and is not weary; and walks, and is not faint."

LECTURE XVIII.

DORCAS

Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body, said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.—Acts, ix. 36-42.

“A GRACIOUS woman,” says Solomon, “retaineth honor.” And who among the daughters of men deserves this noble character? She, whose heart is renewed by a divine agency—she, whose life is replete with benevolence and kindness—she, whose piety and liberality combine to aid and secure each

other—she, whose “prayers and alms come up for a memorial before God.” She is *gracious*; and, according to the testimony of the wise man, attracts *honor*: yea, he tells us she not only possesses, but *retains* it. Endeavors may be made to rob her of this treasure, but she will live down slander, and enthrone herself in the esteem of those around her. She may die, but her example will survive, and her influence will continue. “The name of the wicked shall rot: but the memory of the just is blessed; and the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.”

An illustration of this truth is now before us. For while many, who figured away in the neighborhood, flattered as the beauties of the day, admired for their attire, and distinguished by their accomplishments, have perished in oblivion, that which Dorcas did, wherever the gospel is preached, shall be told as a memorial of her. “Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.”

The place in which this good woman lived was Joppa, now called Jaffa. It was situated on the Mediterranean Sea, and was the nearest seaport to Jerusalem. It is often mentioned in the Scriptures. From hence Solomon received his floated timbers for building the temple. Here Jonah embarked, to flee from the presence of the Lord. Here Peter was authorized, in a vision, to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Here, also, resided another individual immortalized in sacred history, not for secular gran-

deur, but for Christian hospitality—"Simon, a tanner, whose house was by the sea-side."

Concerning her condition in life, as nothing is told us, it would be useless to conjecture. It is probable she was a widow; and she seems to have been a woman of respectability, if not of affluence, in her circumstances.

But her CHARACTER;—her DEATH;—and her RESURRECTION, are the things distinctly recorded of her; and these are worthy of our devout attention.

Let us review, and endeavor to improve them.

I. As to her CHARACTER; she is designated "a certain disciple." It is not said of whom she was a disciple, nor was it necessary. Jesus is the master, the only master of Christians, and she was one of his scholars. This was her dignity and happiness, to sit at the feet of him who is "Lord of all," and of whom it is said, "none teaches like him." But in this case, discipleship included, not only the belief and profession of his doctrine, but also, a conformity to his example. "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

She is, therefore, described by her personal religion. This was not only real, but eminent. Such is the meaning of the expression, she "was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did." There are many to be found in every place, who "care for none of these things." *Their* life is *filled up* with vanity and vice; but is entirely void of godliness. And there are others who are satisfied with low and

common attainments. We do not see in them any disposition to excel: any of those vigorous and indefatigable exertions which a supreme concern in any cause is likely to produce: any of that zeal which is urging on the votaries of the world; and which makes the covetous so strenuous to join house to house, and add field to field; the ambitious to acquire and multiply honors; and the scholar to enlarge his intellectual store. It was not so with Paul. "Brethren," said he, "I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And what is his prayer for the Philippians? "That ye may be *filled* with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." And what does he implore for the Ephesians? "To know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be *filled* with all the fulness of God." With this, also, accords the admonition of the Apostle Peter; "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

All this shows the desirableness and the importance of religious progress, and prosperity in the divine

life. You should be anxious to be not only safe, but exemplary: not only to have faith, but to be "strong in faith :" not only to gain heaven when you die, but to glorify God, and serve your generation while you live. This was the case with Dorcas.

But let us see in what it was that Dorcas excelled. She "was *full*;"—not full of pretences, and of words, and of hearing sermons, and of public assemblies; all of which are often the mere "form of godliness," without "the power." Her religion was substantial and practical: it was the religion of the heart and life: she abounded in obedience: she "was full of *good works and alms-deeds* which she did."

Four things are mentioned to exemplify her practice.

The *First* regards the *Particular Objects of her Beneficence*. They were "*Widows*:"—a class of claimants upon kindness and charity, more often mentioned in the book of God than any other; unless it be "*the fatherless*," who are commonly noticed along with them. And, surely, none have greater demands upon our tenderness and compassion. They are in a state of solitariness, after communion the most intimate and endeared, increasing every joy, and diminishing every sorrow by sympathy and participation. They are in a state of helplessness and hazard, after leaning upon another for assistance and protection; and, therefore, they often become victims of artifice and injustice; while their bereaved offspring are treated with severity or neglect, or are drawn aside by temptation to folly and vice. How often do they exchange ease and affluence for perplexity, toil,

and indigence : for it is not every good man who leaves bags of gold behind him.

Hence says God to the Jews, who were willing enough to attend the forms and ceremonies of divine worship : " When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you : yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear ; your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well ; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." Hence says David ; " A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation." And hence says God himself to his dying servants ; " Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive ; and let thy widows trust in me." " The Lord will destroy the house of the proud : but he will establish the border of the widow."

It would seem that Dorcas *peculiarly* selected this class of characters for her beneficence. And as the charity of an individual cannot be universal in its exercise and efforts, though it be so in its principle ; cannot embrace every object, nor furnish every kind of relief ; would it not be well for those who wish to do good to have some definite plan of usefulness to pursue ; and not to leave their benevolence to accidental applications, and to excitements which may or may not occur ? Having a fixed and definite object of charity always before you, you will be constantly reminded of your obligation, and may devote to it a thousand little attentions and assistances which would otherwise be wasted and lost.

Only, here, two cautions are necessary. The one is, not to bind ourselves down so exclusively to any one class of beneficiaries as to be unable or unwilling to aid other claimants, however deserving or pressing, whom the Providence of God may bring in our way. The other is, not to lay such stress upon our own objects of charity as to think slightly or meanly of those which may be preferred by others; or not to think worthily and well of those who, although truly benevolent, fall not with readiness and ardor into *our* views and projects. Their education, their connections, their situations and conditions in life, their prejudices, and even their piety, may turn into a diversity of channels, the preference and efforts of those who are equally concerned to be useful. If men are endeavoring to do good, let them alone; yea, bid them God speed, though they walk not with us.

The *Second* regards the *Nature, or Kind of her Charity*. It was, furnishing the poor widows with *clothing*. And this is far from being an unimportant method of doing good: "when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him."

There are many cases in which it will be found much more useful to supply the poor with necessities and conveniences than to give them the value of these things in money; for they are sometimes tempted to apply money to other purposes; they are not often distinguished by prudence in their purchases; and they seldom can buy things at first hand. The poor, in general, can supply themselves with provisions better than with raiment; and old people commonly prefer warmth to food. Many poor persons have (I

will not say, a becoming pride, for all pride is an abomination to the Lord ; but) a wish to appear decently clad ; and upon this ground they frequently excuse themselves from appearing in the house of God. How desirable it is to meet their wants and wishes in this respect, and to give them a nail in God's holy place. O, I love to see the poor in the house of God : I love to see there, numbers of children dressed in the uniform of benevolence : it aids my devotion, and excites my gratitude.

Let me beseech you not to waste anything that is convertible into clothing. And do not expend your money on useless ornaments ; for how often would a small part of the price of vanity cover and comfort a fellow-creature for months or years.

The *Third* regards the *Manner in which she supplied the relief*. The benefits conferred were of her own manufacture. An emphasis is obviously laid on the “alms-deeds which she did ;” and we read expressly of “the coats and garments which Dorcas made.” She did not *get* them *made*, but she *made* them : her alms were not only her *gifts* but her *deeds*. There are some who are ready enough to *give* in a way of charity, but they never *do* anything. They never “visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction ;” they never “speak a word in season to him that is weary ;” they never move a foot, nor employ a hand, nor exercise the least self-denial in *their* works of mercy.

Others there are, who *can* do nothing in a way of pecuniary assistance. But let not such conclude that they are doomed to unprofitableness. There are

innumerable ways of being useful; and if you are compelled to say, "Silver and gold have I none;" it becomes you to add, "Such as I have I give; my prayers; my tears; my attentions; my exertions." A great deal of good may be done, and a great deal of charity may be exercised, where nothing is given. My fair readers, especially you who are in younger life, and you who have the command of leisure; not only purchase raw materials and cheap remnants, and preserve laid-aside articles; but refuse not, at least occasionally, to employ your own hands, when alone, or in company with one another; and observe the eulogium pronounced on the virtuous woman, "She stretched out her *hand* to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her *hands* to the needy."

The *Fourth* regards the *Promptitude of her Beneficence*. It was *immediate*, not deferred or delayed; but "while she was with them." She viewed life as "the time to serve the Lord," and her "*own generation by the will of God*." Some are future benefactors. They do not refuse, they only procrastinate. But, says Solomon, "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbor, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give:" for in the meanwhile *he* may be no more, and *you* may be no more.

Some are benevolent when they leave us, not while they are *yet with us*. But if it be well to bequeath, it is better to achieve. Dying alms are commonly suspicious:.. they arise from necessity rather than choice. There is little merit in distributing what you can hold no longer. Be, therefore, your own executors.

Thus you will be enabled to apply your bounty properly, and may enjoy the pleasure of seeing the fruits of it. But how many precious opportunities pass neglected ! And how many will hereafter lament in vain that they did not more for the world, the church, the family, their children and servants, “while yet with them !”

But Dorcas *sickens and dies*: for religion does not exempt us from the common calamities of life, or the ravages of mortality. The grave is “the house appointed for all living:” death is “the way of all the earth.” The young die as well as the old ; the great as well as the small ; the righteous as well as the wicked. This peculiar consideration, indeed, attends the death of the godly, that *they* are disposed of infinitely to their advantage ; and in this view, “if we love them we should rejoice because they go unto the Father.” But this very consideration also aggravates our grief. That which prepares them for the enjoyment of another world, qualifies them for their passage through this ; and in proportion to *their* gain is *our* loss. By their removal we lose intercessors, protectors, benefactors. The world, the church, religion, the gospel, the poor ; all sustain injuries, which are great, if not irreparable.

Death never acts without commission ; but he often cuts down those who, in the estimation of reason, can ill be spared. There is nothing, perhaps, in the whole compass of Divine Providence more mysterious than this; that the useful should be snatched away in the midst of their days, while the unprofitable and mischievous are suffered to continue :—that a Voltaire should live upwards of four score and ten years, while

a nation prematurely mourns over a Josiah, a congregation over a Hervey, a family of babes over a tender mother, the poor widows over Dorcas, their friend and helper. “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”

But He has a right to do what he will with his own ; and very often these dark dispensations are enlightened and relieved by some effects which serve to discover the design of God in them, and to verify the words of the poet :

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take ;
The clouds ye so much dread,
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

At this season, Peter happened to be at Lydda, which was nigh to Joppa ; and, therefore, the disciples immediately sent two men to inform him of the mournful event, and to “desire that he would not delay to come to them.” Was this merely that he might comfort them under their loss ? Or was it that he might enable them to improve the death ? Or did they hope that he would be able to restore the departed to life ? If so, their faith was wonderful, for it does not appear that the disciples had as yet raised any from the dead ; although their Master had promised them that “the works which he did, should they do also ; yea, and greater works than these should they do ; because he went unto the Father.”

However this might be, “Peter arose, and went

with them." It seemed useless, but he knew it was well to be "ready to every good work." It seemed useless, but he knew that the desire of the afflicted, even if apparently unreasonable, should be tenderly indulged. It seemed useless, but he knew that "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God." Perhaps he already had a divine instinct or impulse, the forerunner and the pledge of the miracle which he afterwards performed.

No sooner was Peter arrived than he was conducted into the upper chamber, where the dead body was laid. There a scene was presented that was sufficient to melt a heart much less tender than Peter's. "All the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them."

Here we may remark, that the value of persons is sometimes not known till they are gone. This is the case, indeed, with all our mercies: the want teaches the worth :

"How blessings brighten as they take their flight!"

The praise of this good woman was like her alms, real and sincere. Here was no need of hired mourners. Here are no verses composed; no eulogy pronounced:—but garments, some suspended, and some worn, which her own hands had made; and widows, indebted to her bounty, bedewing the room with their tears.

The best posthumous fame you can acquire is derived from the commendation of facts; from a child you instructed, a school you established, a penitentiary you visited, a sinner you reclaimed. The best proofs

of your importance are to be found in the affections and benedictions of your fellow-creatures while you live, and in their regrets and lamentations when you die. "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy."

I hate dry-eyed funerals. Though it is distressing, it is also satisfactory, at the mouth of the grave, to see one wiping his streaming eyes; to hear another say, "I must have perished but for him;" while we all feel, in a measure, as Thomas did, when he said to his fellow-disciples, "Let us also go that we may die with him."

Do all thus die? Do oppressive masters? Do unkind neighbors? Do the hard-hearted, and the close-fisted thus die? Solomon has said, "When the wicked perish, there is shouting." There is something in this more cruel than the grave. How intolerable the thought, that we may go off and not be missed for a moment; that if we left the world, the door might be shut, and bolted by all that are behind; and that if it were possible to return again to earth, no individual would receive us. And are there not numbers now living, who, if they were buried to-morrow, would have no lamentation over them?

But it was otherwise with Dorcas: "all the widows stood by the Apostle weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was

with them." Such were *their* feelings:—what were *his*?

"It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better." Whose experience has not confirmed the truth of this observation? Have you not entered a room where the effects of death were visible? There lay, about to be fastened up and committed to the dust, the remains of a relation, a friend, a neighbor. Here sat the bereaved connections in sable attire, and with visages of woe; each saying, in a murmur more affecting than words, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me!" Have you not caught the sympathy? Has not the mind been solemnized and softened? Have not envy, malice, earthly-mindedness given place to affectionate and heavenly impressions? You saw that "all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field;" you felt that "man walketh in a vain shadow;" and you sighed, "Where is God, my maker, who giveth songs in the night?" Peter, therefore, was now in a situation to receive good, even if he could not have done any.

But, happily, he can do more than "weep with them that weep;" and he applies himself to his work. He "put them all forth." He dismissed the spectators for two reasons. First, from a principle of Humility; he did not wish to be seen. And, Secondly, from a principle of Importance; company might have

hindered the intenseness of his devotion. Being thus alone, he “kneeled down, and prayed:” and then “turning himself to the body, he said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes; and when she saw Peter, she sat up.” This was expressive of reverence; but what must have been her surprise? When she fell asleep in death, some of her own attendants were doubtless around her bed: but now they have vanished, and Peter only is present—“Where are *they*?—And how comes *he* here?—

But where had her spirit been during this interval? In Paradise? or detained near her body, to which it was so soon to be reunited? Could she distinctly remember what had taken place in her separate state? Did she ever converse upon this subject? Or did any press her concerning it? We can decide nothing. The Scripture does not gratify our curiosity. “Secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children.”

Next, we are told that Peter “gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.” O! for the painter’s pencil! O! to see *him* giving, and *them* receiving this present! “There, take your benefactress, and dry up your tears.”

This is very instructive. It shows us that kindness was the principle of the miracle; not self-applause; not vainglory. Then, Peter would have claimed her as an attendant, and required her to follow him as a standing proof of his supernatural powers; but he resigns her to those who stood in need of her services.

It teaches us not only the power of God, but his goodness. We see that “the Lord is gracious, and full of compassion;” that “he will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.”

And does not this show us the importance of beneficence? Were we left to judge, we, perhaps, should have thought it better for Stephen to have been raised up than Dorcas. But God revives the one, and leaves the other in the grave, because “so it seemed good in his sight;” and, perhaps, to teach us that our thoughts are not his thoughts; that we are improper judges of usefulness; that persons whose excellencies are of sober, modest, and retiring character, may be more important in the eye of heaven than those who are more brilliant and marvellous; that moral qualities are far more regarded by him than intellectual ones; and that, in some cases, a good life may be as valuable as good preaching. *Whom* does he, by a miracle, bring back from the arrest of death? A hero?—a politician?—a philosopher?—“Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.” No! He brings back one who made garments for the poor!

And does he not hereby show us that he takes pleasure in those who, like himself, delight in mercy; and that “he is not unrighteous to forget their work and labor of love, in ministering to the saints”?

In a word, does he not say, “Them that honor me; I will honor”?

But you ask, was this a privilege to Dorcas?—

to be brought back into a vale of tears, and again to have to "walk through the valley of the shadow of death," after she had happily passed it?—I answer, Yes! notwithstanding this, it was a great privilege. It was a marvellous distinction conferred upon her; and it added to her usefulness, and to her reward.

The saints on earth have one privilege above the saints in heaven. It is in the means and opportunities of doing good. "The spirits of just men made perfect" cannot forgive injuries, cannot exercise candor, cannot teach transgressors the ways of God, cannot feed the hungry, nor clothe the naked. This is *your* privilege alone, Christians; and it will not be your privilege long.

We may be assured that with much zeal Dorcas would improve the remainder of her days, "yielding herself to God," as one, now in a new sense, "alive from the dead;" laying up a richer treasure in heaven; and returning, after a little time, with a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Though there is nothing meritorious in our works, yet grace has made them rewardable; and "what a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Such a miracle would naturally excite attention. When Martha made our Lord a supper, "much people of the Jews knew that he was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead." What an interesting character would a man be who had been brought back from the invisible world! Our Saviour had said that the sickness of Lazarus would be "for the glory of God." His resurrection

from the dead carried such conviction with it, that we find "the Chief Priests consulted that they might put Lazarus to death; because that by reason of him, many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus." And thus it was here. The revival of Dorcas not only benefited the poor widows; but instructed and comforted the disciples; confirmed the Gospel by proving that it was the power of God, and that its preachers were the messengers of heaven; put to silence the ignorance of some; and so wrought on the minds of others that it is said, the thing "was known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord." Her resurrection, therefore, was a great privilege, for which she is now praising God.

What now remains, but to recommend the imitation of this example to all; especially to you, my female readers? Alms-giving is made too much of by some; they consider it as the whole of charity; when, according to the Apostle, there may be no charity in it; for it is possible for a man to give all his goods to feed the poor, and yet not have charity.

But others make too little of alms-giving; and some preachers seem afraid of enforcing it. But when it results from principle, much of pure and undefiled religion is included in it. And vain is love without it: "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Vain is faith without it: "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give

them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

It has often been supposed that there is less liberality among women than among men: and it has been accounted for by their circumstances and habits in life. They are not accustomed to handle money in so large a way as men, and therefore they feel more in parting with small sums. They are often limited in their means. The necessity under which they are laid by nature or opinion to appear fine, renders temptations to dress often too strong for frail humanity; and hence there is little left to spend on charity. Some of them have not the means of alms-giving as they ought to have; for whatever *can* be laid by for the relief of the poor, the wife should share equally with the husband.

After all, I should be unwilling to admit the charge. And sure I am, that if you *were* more defective than the other sex in this kind of beneficence, (which I do not believe,) you would be more criminal too. The very law of nature has inclined you, in a peculiar degree, to compassion and pity. Your delicate sensibilities are more affected with the presentation of distress and pain. Your experience, which makes you feel so many privations and trials of your own, enables you to sympathize more with the sorrowful. The quickness of sentiment in you operates like instinct, without the coldness of reasoning, and urges you immediately to relieve; while *we*, perhaps, are pausing to suspect, and question and deliberate. None can relish like you the delicious gratification

arising from doing good. Abound then, more and more, in these dispositions and exertions, which so well become your character and condition.

But you will no think of *trusting* in any of your performances. When you have done all you will say, "we are unprofitable servants." You will "rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." But it will, surely, be encouraging and gratifying to you to reflect, that "with such sacrifices God is well pleased." You will not expect preservation from sickness; but he will comfort and "strengthen you upon the bed of languishing; and will make all your bed in your sickness." You will not expect to be brought back from the dead; but prayers may be heard for your recovery. When you die, the Saviour will watch over your remains, and he "will raise you up at the last day." "They cannot recompense you, but you shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

LECTURE XIX.

THE ELECT LADY.

The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth ; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth ; for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us forever.—*2 JOHN, i. 2.*

MUCH of the New Testament is epistolary. These epistles are of three kinds. Some are directed to Christians at large ; some to single churches ; and some to particular individuals. Of the third class are two of John's epistles.

The one was addressed to a *male*. His name was Gaius. He was distinguished by bodily indisposition, soul-prosperity, and great liberality and zeal.

The other was written to a *female*. She is called “the Elect Lady.”

But who was this distinguished personage ? Perhaps she was a deaconess. 'Perhaps she had a church in her house. Perhaps her mansion was the asylum of the persecuted, and the dwelling where the ministers of the Word and the brethren always found a

welcome and a home. She was, obviously, well known, of high reputation, and accounted worthy of double honor.

Let us consider.

I. WHAT THE APOSTLE SAYS AS DESCRIPTIVE OF HER CHARACTER.

And II. WHAT THE APOSTLE DOES AS EXPRESSIVE OF HIS REGARD.

We notice I. WHAT THE APOSTLE SAYS AS DESCRIPTIVE OF HER CHARACTER.

And here, we remark at the outset, that John does not mean to represent her as a faultless being, unless in degree. But there is an important difference between comparative and absolute completeness. Imperfections are found in the holiest individuals while here. "In many things," says James, "we offend all." In like manner John himself declares, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves; and the truth is not in us:" and he would not contribute to such a delusion. He therefore views her not as infallible and impeccable; but as in the body, though not in the flesh; as liable to temptation; and even, as not beyond the need of cautions and admonitions, which he therefore administers.

Neither does he furnish us with a full delineation of her character, as it really was; but gives us a few intimations concerning her, which will enable us to estimate her worth.

The foundation of all her excellencies was her *personal and evangelical godliness*. She was "walking

in the truth." There are various kinds of truth; but by truth here we are to understand the Gospel, which so well deserves the name, and is so emphatically styled "*The Truth*"—"the Truth of God"—"the Truth as it is in Jesus."

Her regard to this truth is expressed by her "*walking in it.*" Walking implies life, action, and progress; and she exemplified the influence of the principle by walking in the *knowledge* of the truth; in the *practice* of the truth; in the *profession* of the truth; and in the *service* of the truth; or, as the Apostle expresses it, in being a "fellow-helper to the truth."

She seems to have been a woman of some *rank and distinction*. The Lord commonly takes his followers from the lower walks of life, and chooses "the poor of this world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him." "Not many mighty, not many noble are called;" but the very language implies that there is no absolute exclusion. There was a time when piety rode in the second chariot in Egypt, and presided over a hundred and twenty-seven provinces in Babylon. We read in the Gospels of a "rich counsellor," and in the Acts of "honorable women, not a few." And there have always been some who, though not seeking great things for themselves, have yet possessed them; and they have brought their toys and baubles to the foot of the Cross, glad to part with all to "obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

These have been so few as to evince that religion

does not depend, for its spread or support, upon wordly greatness; yet they have, also, been sufficiently numerous to remove the prejudice, so often entertained, that it is only suited to the low, vulgar, and illiterate. Cowper, when lamenting the common degeneracy of our country, is constrained to admit some exceptions; and he mentions

“ — one, who wears a coronet, and prays.”

And, blessed be God, this may be now said of many; for, perhaps, in our day more has been done in a work of grace, amongst persons of quality, than amongst any other class of our population.

Again, we see that this excellent lady was in *wedded life*. And let not ignorance, and superstition, and the doctrine of demons lead you to oppose, or even to undervalue that which inspiration itself pronounces to be “honorable in all;” which was becoming and needful even in Paradise; which was sanctioned by the Saviour’s presence, and earliest miracle; which is the greatest source of domestic purity, and peace, and pleasure; which more promotes and secures the welfare of the community than all civil institutions besides, while it invests woman with her chief importance, derived from her maternity.

Nothing, however, is said of the husband of this distinguished lady. This may be accounted for in two ways. *First*, He may not have been a Christian; and if so, and if when she married him she was herself a Christian, she disregarded the requisition to marry “only in the Lord;” and she had no reason

to complain of any trials resulting from it. But she may (and this seems more likely to have been the case) have been herself converted after the union; while he remained in the same state as before; and it has commonly been observed, that religion has fewer adherents among males than females.

2 Or, *secondly*, her husband might have been dead; and, considering the representation given here of the state of her family, this appears to be much more probable than that he was a heathen or an infidel.

Now, if this was true, she had been called to sustain the most painful of all bereavements, and was a *widow*; and a “widow indeed,” for she was a *maternal* widow. It is trying when a wife, after the most intimate and endeared fellowship, is left to travel the remainder of life without companion, guide, or helper; but what is it, then, not only to be left alone, but to be charged with a fatherless family, with the whole burden of duty resting on herself; and to feel that she is entrusted with their estate, their health, their morals, their lives, and their eternal interests? Surely here is enough to call forth the exclamation, “Who is sufficient for these things?”

And this was the case here; for we read of the “*children*” of this “elect lady.” “Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is his reward.” But what a heritage may they often be found! “Children,” says Henry, “are certain cares, uncertain comforts, and probable crosses.” Many, who once longed for offspring, are now ready to join in the decision, “Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never

gave suck." "A foolish son," says Solomon, "is the heaviness of his mother." As the father is no less interested than the mother, why does Solomon mention the mother only? Is it to intimate that she is frequently the cause, by imprudent indulgences and early concealments? Or is it because she is likely to suffer most from the pressure of the calamity, having fewer engagements to divert her attention from vexation and anguish? If the troubler lives much at home, she, principally, has to endure the evil; and if he transgresses abroad, she is sure always to hear the worst of it from the loud liar, report.

However this may be, how many a mother feels this "heaviness" pressing her life down to the ground! And, at the sight or mention of an idler, a drunkard, a profligate, or a despiser of them that are good, yet one

— whom she has borne and bred,
Nursed on her knee, and at her bosom fed;

how can she, with a heart's bitterness known only to herself, help bewailing, and alas! in vain; "What my son! and what the son of my womb! and what the son of my vows!" And are parents in higher life less exposed to such dangers and trials?

But we hail this "elect lady." This was not *her* affliction; for we read that her "*children*," like herself, were "*found walking in truth*." Nothing is said of the means of their religion. The expedients and instrumentalities, providential and gracious, in awakening, enlightening, and reclaiming individuals, are innumerable. What is not sometimes thus divinely

employed? "Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living."

Perhaps one of her children was wrought upon by his paternal bereavement, God addressing his softened heart as he returned from the grave, and saying, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" Perhaps another was laid hold of by a bodily disease, which threatened to shorten the days of his youth, and hasten him into an eternal world. Perhaps a third was impressed by the preaching of "the truth as it is in Jesus." This, indeed, is the ordinary means of conversion: "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

But why may we not conclude that it was chiefly by *her own instrumentality* that they had been brought into the ways of truth; so that they were in a double sense her offspring, imbibing from her not only the milk of the breast, but likewise "the sincere milk of the word"? Thus, to Hannah we owe Samuel; and to Eunice, Timothy: and Baxter tells us that "if parental duty were faithfully and fully performed, the preaching of the word would not long remain the usual means of conversion." For it should be observed, that even good men and women are not all good fathers and mothers. It is said of Eli, "his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not:" and of David, with regard to Adonijah, that he "had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?" To look into the families of some professors for anything like consistent piety, is like seeking to "gather grapes of thorns, and figs of

thistles." It was not thus among our forefathers. They did not expect to reap where they had not sown, or to gather where they had not strawed. In the houses of the Henrys, and numbers of their contemporaries, religion was a kind of heir-loom ; "instead of the fathers were the children;" and "as was the mother, so was the daughter." Where the proper means are properly used, we have always some instances to show what may be done by education, and example, even fallen as human nature is: while Scripture assures us; (and if this be not a promise which is always true, it is a proverb which must be generally true;) "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

This, O ye mothers, is peculiarly for you. Remember what opportunities, and means, and influences you possess; and reflect, what blessings in your day and generation you will become, if you send forth, from under your care, those who will prove the servants of the Most High God, and the noblest benefactors and ornaments of society.

Finally, this "elect lady" had not only holy offspring, but *pious connections and relatives*. John speaks of her sister, and of her nephews and nieces :—"The *children* of thine elect sister greet thee." If you say this was no part of her character, yet it was, surely, no inconsiderable part of her happiness :—yea, it wóuld possibly and probably be found, if all were known, to be connected with her religion, and really derived from it. For who can tell how far it was in answer to her prayers, and the result of her

example, endeavors, and influence? Many of the godly mentioned in the Scripture, had pious kindred. Peter and Andrew, John and James, were brothers. In one family, (probably consisting of no more,) we find the three friends of the Saviour: "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, says, "Salute Andronicus and Junia, *my kinsmen*, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the Apostles, who also were in Christ before me." "Salute Rufus, chosen in the Lord; and his mother, and *mine*."

There are few single conversions. They who are first called, are often tried for a time; and some for a long time; and cry with Esther, "How can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?" But as, by the grace of God, they are sure to be concerned for their welfare, and will labor for their salvation, they seldom labor in vain. And this success would be oftener witnessed, if their attempts were made in more simple and entire dependence upon the grace of the Spirit; if their efforts were uniformly accompanied with consistency of conduct; and if their religion were rendered attractive rather than repulsive, abounding in the things which are "lovely and of good report." Where this has been the case, neighbors have been induced to say, "we will go with you;" masters and mistresses have been blessed with good and faithful servants; sisters have allured brothers into the way everlasting; and not a few wives have prevailed upon even opposing husbands to "take sweet counsel together, and walk to the house of God in company." And "how knowest *thou*, O wife, whether thou shalt not save *thy* husband?"

Such was this illustrious female; and you know who hath said, "Them that honor me, I will honor." Having, therefore, shown what John says, as descriptive of her character, let us,

II. See WHAT THE APOSTLE DOES, AS EXPRESSIVE OF HIS REGARD.

Here two things are peculiarly striking and observable:—his *Letter*:—and his *Visit*.

First, He writes her an Epistle. This Epistle we possess. It does not fall in with our plan or limits to comment on its various contents. We may remark, that correspondence is not always significant of respect. Letters are of various descriptions. There are letters of necessity, and letters of formality, and letters of business. These spring from no special regard, and confer no distinction. But it is otherwise with letters of choice, preference, and esteem; especially when coming from those who are not only our friends, but our superiors. Perhaps there is nothing of which persons are more proud than an epistle from a distinguished individual. How vain would many feel, if they could show a letter addressed to themselves from an extraordinary scholar, or genius, or statesmen, or warrior:—a Chatham, or a Wellington.

What was it then to receive a letter thus indited, and directed;—"The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth." O! who would be without affection? Who would not be loved, rather than admired? What pleasure could we feel in our dependents and servants, unless we were loved by them, as well as obeyed? I could not bear to own a favorite animal, unless I made him fond of

me. And what was it, then, for this honored lady to receive a letter, assuring her that she was loved by the writer in sincerity and truth ; a letter in his own handwriting ; a letter from an Apostle, “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” who had received the visions of the Almighty in Patmos, the only survivor of the twelve heralds of heaven ; how would she feel at the opening of such a letter ; how would she value it ; how carefully preserve it ; how often re-peruse it ; and how tempted to boast of it ! And if autographs were sought after then as they are now, what a price would this letter have fetched ; and who would have deemed it dear !—But, what became of it ? Was it burned in the flames of persecution ? Was it destroyed by accident ? Or did it decay and moulder away of age ?

Secondly, He honors her not only with a letter, but with a Visit. “Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink : but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.”

We ought to be thanful for *ink and paper*. They identify information ; they perpetuate intelligence ; they annihilate distance ; they enable us to talk without being heard. John himself was at this very time employing them ; but he knew that though correspondence was good, personal intercourse was better, not only because of the pleasure it affords by means of feature-expression (far beyond any emphasis of mere words) but also by yielding freer and ampler communication ; for however nimble the pen of a ready writer may be, it cannot utter a thousandth part of the overflowings of the tongue.

We know not the place of the residence of this lady ; and therefore we know not how far John had to travel : nor can we tell the mode of his conveyance ; for he could hardly, at his age, travel on foot. He speaks of his intended journey with pleasure ; yet he could not be insensible of the difficulties, dangers, and uncertainties of travelling ; especially in those days, and under a weight of years. He, therefore, expresses himself concerning it dependently and piously ; and says, “*I trust to come unto you;*” acknowledging the providence of God, and confiding for the issue in him, “in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways.” Herein he should be our example, for we are commanded to “commit our way unto the Lord, and trust also in him, that he may bring it to pass.” We ought to say, “If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that:” for though “a man’s heart deviseth his way, the Lord directeth his steps:” and in vain we say, with regard to any design or enterprise, “Amen,” unless “the Lord God shall say so too.”

But see the advantage which John desires and expects from the journey itself :—“That our joy may be full.” The joy of which he speaks is not carnal or worldly joy ; but that joy which is one of “the fruits of the Spirit:” and of this, it is obvious the first Christians had more than we moderns commonly experience ; and they valued it more highly ; valued it, not only because of the pleasure, but especially because of the profit connected with it. “The joy of the Lord was their strength.” It enlivened their duty ; it soothed their minds ; it weaned them from the world ;

it adorned and recommended their religion to all around them. They regarded it, therefore, as not only a privilege, but a duty; and were concerned to "walk in the comfort of the Holy Ghost," as well as "in the fear of the Lord :" remembering the admonition, "rejoice evermore ;" and the commandment, "ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

This joy was to be not only multiplied, but mutual. John therefore says, "that *our* joy may be full." They were to be blessings to each other; not only the apostle to the disciple, but the disciple to the apostle. In like manner, Paul writes to the Romans, "For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that *I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.*"

There is no such thing as independence: all are needful, all are useful. We are not only "one body in Christ," but "every one also members one of another." "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you."—"And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it."

But let us for a moment imagine this visit accomplished, and John arrived at the mansion of his honored friend. How did she look for him, as the time of his coming drew near! With what welcome did she receive him! Though he affected no state, with what sedulousness was he attended! What satisfaction and gratitude would she feel in having such an inmate under her roof, such a guest at her table, such

a minister in her family! How would all “rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man!” How would he pray and praise, morning and evening! How would he converse! Cowper has, in a measure, informed us:

When one, that holds communion with the skies,
Has filled his urn where these pure waters rise,
And once more mingles with us meaner things,
‘Tis even as if an angel shook his wings;
Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,
That tells us whence his treasures are supplied.

Let us make one reflection, and conclude. It regards the power of the social principle; and the value, not only of friendship, but of actual intercourse.

Man is designed and formed for society. His faculties, and inclinations, and exigencies, all urge him to associate. In his natural state he loves society in sin; and in his renewed state he loves society in grace. Whatever attachments he had before, he then easily drops the sons and daughters of vanity and vice; and “takes hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, I will go with you; for I have heard that God is with you.”

Many things may often keep the partakers of divine grace asunder; but, “being let go, they go to their own company;” for each of them can say, “I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.”

No, “it is not good for man to be alone;” nor is it good for the Christian to be alone. “Two are better than one.” Bunyan knew this: he has no solitary pilgrim. Though Christian began his journey alone, he soon enjoyed a fellow-traveller; and

Hopeful was found to be his companion, when Faithful was removed.

But love delights in the presence of its object; and as “iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.” John does not express this more strongly than Paul. To Timothy he says: “Greatly desiring to see thee, that I may be filled with joy;” and to the Thessalonians he writes; “Night and day praying exceedingly that I may see your face, and may perfect that which is lacking in your faith;” and to the Romans; “I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.—That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.”

Here we perceive the desirableness and advantage of personal intercourse and communion. Let us enlarge and exemplify the thought in a few instances.

And *First*, How pleasing is it to meet “face to face,” and commune, after long separation and absence; especially if, during that separation, we have experienced trying circumstances, and perilous events. And in a world like this, when is it that we are not exposed? and do we not “stand in jeopardy every hour”? But, to meet again with those we love, after a murderous robbery, a shipwreck, a desperate accident, or a threatening disease;—O what gushings of feeling then! what eagerness of words! what mingling of tears, joyous tears! and, surely, if Christians, what divine acknowledgments! “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.” “I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and

delivered me from all my fears." Thus Jacob and Joseph met after twenty years of absence.

Secondly, How pleasing to meet "face to face," and commune, in the apartments and confinements of trouble. This indeed is a duty, and we are as much required to "visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction," as to "keep ourselves unspotted from the world." Have you ever been in the house of mourning; or in the chamber of sickness; or in a state of gloom and despondency, ready to say, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me;" and has a fellow Christian entered with the cup of consolation in his hand, and a word in season on his tongue? Has not his face appeared as the face of an angel? Have you not said, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord"? And needed you the wisest of men to tell you that as "ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel"? Thus David and Jonathan met: "Jonathan went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God."

Thirdly, How pleasing to meet "face to face," in the exercises of social devotion in the sanctuary. Who has not taught his child to say, and who has not said himself;

Lord how delightful 'tis to see
A whole assembly worship thee!
At once they sing, at once they pray;
They hear of heaven, and learn the way.
I have been there and still would go,
'Tis like a little heaven below.

It was the loss of such a privilege that led David to say; "When I remember these things I pour out

my soul in me : for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy-day." It was the want of this that induced him to say, " My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is ; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary."

Then, *Finally*, What will it be to meet "face to face" in heaven ? Then our joy will be full. This supposes, indeed, a mutual recognition of each other there ; and, says Baxter, " I am fully persuaded I shall love my friends in heaven ; and therefore know them ; and this, principally, binds me to them on earth. If I thought I should never know them more ; nor, therefore, love them after death, I should love them comparatively little, as I do all other transient things : but now I delight in conversing with them, as believing I shall commune with them forever." So did Paul : for said he, " What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing ? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming ? For ye are our glory and joy."

But what a difference between our meetings "face to face" on earth, and those we hope to enjoy in heaven ! Now our communions are few in number, often short in duration, and always liable to interruption ; but none of these disadvantages will be known there.

Here we are in a state of imperfection ; and we mistake each other ; and offences will come ; and we have frequently much to explain, much to excuse,

much to forbear, and much to forgive ; but there, we shall be “without fault before the throne of God and of the Lamb.”

Here we are in a state of exposure to numberless afflictions and sorrows ; and when we meet, if not ourselves in any trouble, our connections are, and we “weep with them that weep ;” and often endure, by sympathy, as much or more than the sufferers themselves. But there, nothing is to be seen, but joy and gladness ; nothing heard, but thanksgiving and the voice of melody. Here we always meet in a vale of tears—

There on a green and flowery mount,
Our weary souls shall sit ;
And with transporting joys recount
The labors of our feet.

No vain discourse shall fill our tongue,
Nor trifles vex our ear ;
Infinite grace shall be our song,
And God rejoice to hear.

Millions of years our wondering eyes
Shall o'er thy beauties rove,
And endless ages we'll adore
The glories of thy love.

Forever his dear sacred name
Shall dwell upon our tongue,
And Jesus and Salvation be
The close of every song.

LECTURE XX.

THE DEFORMED DAUGHTER OF ABRAHAM.

And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in nowise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day. The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day? And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

LUKE, xiii 10-17.

THIS striking fact is recorded only by the Evangelist Luke; and it has been much more rarely noticed than any of the Saviour's other signs and

wonders. Like all his miracles, it is “written, that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God; and that believing we may have life through his name.”

But besides this, it seems to have had a peculiar and pleasing aim, like that of the miracle at the marriage in Cana of Galilee; namely, to hold forth the Saviour in the milder rays of his glory; displaying not only his majesty, but his meekness; not only his benevolence, but his condescension; not only his compassion, but his tenderness; and even his regard for our feelings, as well as for our welfare.

To give some order to our reflections on this miracle of mercy, let us

I. LOOK AT THE PATIENT.

II. OBSERVE THE CURE.

And III. EXAMINE THE INFLUENCE.

With regard I. To THE PATIENT, we may observe—

First, Her Descent.

The Saviour calls her a “daughter of Abraham;” thus showing a regard for the venerable Patriarch, who lived so many ages before. There is something striking in the natural relationship to such an individual; but Abraham sustained a double paternity; and we have reason to believe this woman was a daughter of Abraham not only as a Jewess, but also as a believer, being related to him in spirit as well as by blood.

So, the Apostle says, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed;" and "They who are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." In like manner, the Saviour declares, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham."

But if this were her prerogative, we here see that "all things come alike to all;" and that, as to outward dispensation, "no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before him." If, in this respect, there be any difference between the righteous and the wicked, it is often even in favor of the latter; who "have no changes," and "fear not God;" while "many are the afflictions of the righteous."

Secondly, Observe her Condition.

She labored under "a spirit of infirmity," and "was bowed together, and could in nowise lift up herself." Admitting that her affliction was not attended with the greatest degree of suffering or danger, yet it must have been very trying; and especially so to a female, to whom beauty and figure belong; who has an exquisite sensibility to personal appearance; and who knows how much more she can attract, impress, and influence by external charms than by superior accomplishments. Was it nothing to be slighted?—nothing to be pointed at by the finger of scorn?—nothing to be unable to look up and see the heavens?—nothing to be compelled to crouch beneath others, and to be almost enchain'd to the ground? Yet "who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow?" How many have been

constrained to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." How many, after awhile, have blessed God for the effects of an accident or disorder, which once filled them with pain and dismay. It was the means of turning them from folly and vanity to the cultivation of the mind, and of inducing them to "seek those things which are above," and to prize "the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." And what is everything else, compared with this? "Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." "A gracious woman retaineth honor."

Mephibosheth fell from his nurse's arms, and became a cripple for life; yet, owing to his lameness, his life was preserved from destruction; and he was appointed to eat meat at the king's table. And this woman, but for her deformity and affliction, would not have known the power and grace of the Saviour.

Thirdly, Observe The Infliction of the Evil.

"Lo, Satan hath bound her." How are we to understand this? It does not refer to a personal possession. Then, does the historian think with the wise, and speak with the vulgar? The language accords with the common phraseology of the Jews at this period, and in earlier times. They were accustomed to personify qualities, and to ascribe everything strange, inexplicable, and ominous, to evil spirits. Thus, Saul's melancholy is called "an evil spirit from the Lord;" and the abstemiousness of John is accounted for by alleging, "he hath a devil."

The truth is, diabolical influence is allowed by all professing Christians, except Socinians. It is observable that, even in the indictments of heinous criminals in our courts of justice, the language more than implies this. The Scripture is full of the doctrine; and if Satan has the power of death, why not equally of disease? If his agency be not personal and immediate, it is not the less real. As he was the originator of all evil, so to him may be attributed all its results. Only, the Scripture employs his instrumentality to express his agency. Thus, Satan is said to desire to have Peter, that he might sift him as wheat; referring to his fear and fall; and he is said to cast Christians into prison, that is, by the persecution of unjust judges. Thus, also, in the afflictions of Job, Satan is represented as bringing all the evils upon him; though the Sabeans, and the Chaldeans, and the natural elements, were the immediate causes of the whole.

Fourthly, Observe The Duration of her Confinement.

It was no less than "eighteen years." Many complain of the length of their trials, when, perhaps, they have not been exercised so many weeks or months, as this woman had years. Let us compare conditions; and before we exclaim, "Behold, and see, if ever there was sorrow like unto my sorrow;" let us think of others. Let us think of Æneas, who had kept his bed eight years. Let us go to the pool of Bethesda, and see a man who had been a sufferer for thirty and eight years, and had "no one when the water was troubled, to put him into the pool."

"Eighteen years!"—This is a long portion of

life to be doomed to mortification and helplessness. Why does the Lord appoint those who are so dear to him to languish and suffer so long? How gladly should *we* relieve a beloved relation or friend, if we had it in our power; while he, by a single volition, could wipe away every tear from the eye. Yet our love, compared with his, is no more than as a drop to the ocean. But his love is as wise as it is great. He does what seemeth him good; and what seems good to him, must be so. He cannot err. He has reasons for his conduct which will fully justify it when they are made known.

He sometimes delays the relief of his suffering people, not because he takes pleasure in their pain, but for their profit; "for he is a God of judgment; and blessed are all they that wait for him." It is, therefore, "good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." "He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger forever; lest the spirit should fail before him, and the souls which he has made."

"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick;" and such sickness this poor creature had felt for eighteen years; and long ago she had concluded that her case was desperate.

"At evening time it shall be light." We have seen this *Patient*, "a daughter of Abraham," yet deeply afflicted, and for "eighteen years bound by Satan," during which time she was so "bowed together, that she could in nowise lift up herself."

We now, II. Observe the CURE.

Mark the circumstances that attended it. They are four.

The *First* circumstance is the *Place*, where the work was performed. It was in the *Synagogue*. Synagogues were Jewish places of worship. The precise period of their introduction it is not easy to determine. They are supposed to have originated in Babylon, where the Jews were exiled from their own land. They were common, at the time of our Lord's appearance, in Judea, and indeed in all other places where Jews were to be found. They were not places of sacrifice, but of devotion and instruction; where the Scriptures were read and expounded, and where occasional exhortation was allowed.

When our Saviour was near to the temple, we always find him worshipping there; but when at a distance we find him attending in the synagogues. We do not wonder, therefore, that on this occasion *he* was in the synagogue; but that this woman was there may produce surprise. It would expose her to observation; and it must have been difficult to get her poor body there, especially if she was not dwelling in the neighborhood. This would have been deemed sufficient to excuse, if not justify, many a one for not attending the public assembly. But she was of another mind; and it was well she was. What would she have lost, if she had been absent on this occasion? Who can ever tell what he loses by absence from the house of God? What did Thomas lose, by not being with the eleven, when Jesus showed them his hands and his side? And who can tell what is gained by attendance, especially when persons exer-

cise self-denial for this end? "Them that honor me," says God, "I will honor." Few, therefore, feed with such a relish on the word, as those who come from a distance, and with many a weary step and difficult effort.

This woman broke through difficulties in order to be found in her place; and there she met with the Saviour. She had no expectation of the event. Her aim was to serve God, to hear his word, and to promote the welfare of her soul. She had no thought about her poor body; yet she obtained the deliverance of that also; for, if we "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, other things shall be added;" and "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

The *Second* circumstance is the *Time*. It was "on the Sabbath." This season was sanctified by God himself from the beginning, when he had finished his work of creation. On this day the Saviour performed many of his miracles; to show that he was the "Lord of the Sabbath," and that "it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath days." It is "the day which the Lord hath made," and in which he still accomplishes the wonders of his grace.

This is seen in the deliverance of sinners from the bondage of corruption. Bound as they are by their evil propensities and confirmed habits, and "led captive by the devil at his will;" yet they have been released, and made "free indeed." "The Lord looseth the prisoners."

It is seen in the release of distressed consciences,

bound and tied by guilt and fear, so that they could not lift up their soul to God: but “the Lord raiseth up them that are bowed down;” he causeth the prisoners to go free; he hath loosed my bonds.”

It is seen in the removal of his people from this present evil world. They have often been emancipated on the Sabbath. A remarkable instance of this is recorded by Mr. Howe, in a funeral sermon for Mrs. Esther Sampson. She had been confined to her bed eighteen years, and was released on a Sabbath day.

The *Third* circumstance is the *Mode of the Cure*. And here we find his *eye*, his *tongue*, and his *hands* are all employed. His *eye*—He “saw her.”—He surveyed all the worshippers. In one respect she was more noticeable than others, because of her deformity; but in others she was less visible: for she was probably almost concealed in the surrounding crowd by the lowness of her stature; and it is likely that she had stationed herself in an obscure part of the assembly; yet, towards her, well knowing her condition, her want, and her desire, with compassion and tenderness, Jesus directed his eye.

His *tongue*—“He called her to him.” “You, poor woman,” probably addressing her by name; “draw near to me.” What surprise must have seized her! “Whence could he know me? And what can he want with me?” Doubtless, afraid and ashamed, she was ready to shrink back at this exposure of her condition. Now every eye is turned towards her, as she creeps along. A breathless silence for a few moments prevailed, and then, he

audibly said to her, “Woman, thou art loosed from thy infirmity :” meaning, “thou *shalt be loosed* ;” for he always spoke like himself, and with him purpose and accomplishment are the same. His will is action. “He speaks, and it is done ; he commands, and i stands fast.”

His *hands*—“He laid his hands on her.” Thi was to awaken attention, and to show that the cui proceeded from himself. His touch is vital.

The *fourth* and last circumstance is the *Speediness of the Operation*: “and *immediately* she was made straight.” Our Saviour sometimes wrought cures in cases which human skill and science could relieve—at least which they can *now* relieve ; but even then, the manner proclaimed the miracle. His operation was always successful, perfect, and instantaneous. Fevers are removed by a course of medical treatment ; but when Simon’s wife’s mother lay sick of a fever, “he took her by the hand, and lifted her up ; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.” One day, dining with one of the chief of the Pharisees, there was a certain man before him who had the dropsy. It might have been possible to have gradually reduced the poor swollen creature to his ordinary size, but Jesus “took him, and healed him, and let him go.” And so, in the case before us, both the thing and the manner were unique. The deformed curvature of this poor woman seems to have been natural ; it had been fixed for eighteen years ; and by no human process, but by a momentary imposition of hands, his work is perfect and complete. “He does all things well.”

Men can now, by means of couching, effect a cure in certain cases of blindness; but when the operation is successful, the process is slow; and it is long before the patient can use the organ, and endure the light; but Jesus, in a moment, opened the beggar's eyes, and he went on seeing.

Let us notice, *3dly*, THE INFLUENCE OF THIS MIRACULOUS CURE.

We see this exemplified in the four parties concerned.

First, in the *Patient* herself. - She "glorified God." And what wonder, considering the change she had experienced:—now breathing freely—standing erectly—walking easily. Doubtless she was ready to exclaim, "Surely, this could have been accomplished by a divine power alone: surely, the kingdom of heaven is at hand: surely, this is the prophet who was to come into the world." Her mouth would express her gratitude and praise: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? Here I dedicate myself, health and strength, body and spirit, to his service who has made me whole."

One thing should strike us all; yet who is struck with it?—namely, if this poor creature was grateful for the recovery of her powers, after eighteen years of infirmity and destitution, what ought to be our thankfulness to the kindness of Providence for the uninterrupted preservation, the full and constant use of all?

Secondly, its influence upon the *Ruler* of the synagogue. "He answered," indeed, "with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day;"

but he seemed afraid to look on the Saviour himself, who had performed the miracle. He therefore addressed the people; and instead of hailing the poor woman on her recovery, he virtually censured her. He "said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them, therefore, come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day :" as if she had come intentionally for that purpose, though it does not appear that she had any thought of the kind. But suppose that she had; was she to be blamed for seizing such an opportunity of getting relief? But when persons dislike a thing, it is easy to find fault with the doing of it; and often the veil which is thrown over their dislike is slender, and easily seen through. The motive professed is often the least felt. Thus, here, the miracle was offensive, as it honored the Messiah. The complaint about the profanation of the Sabbath was a mere pretence. He could not be ignorant that the Saviour had not violated the fourth commandment. Had he himself been ill on the Sabbath, and had the Pharisees called in physicians to relieve him, he would not have sent them away, saying, "There are six days in which men ought to work; on these I will seek to be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." Nay, he knew that he himself did not keep his oxen and asses tied up all the Sabbath day. Our Lord, therefore, calls him a hypocrite, saying, "Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen

years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?"

Thirdly, its influence upon the *Adverse Party on the same side*. They seem to have been many; but "when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed." They could no longer resist the truth: but perhaps they were confounded, rather than convinced; for they made no frank acknowledgment.

Fourthly, its influence upon the *Rest of the Audience*. "All the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him." "Have any of the rulers believed on him?" but "the common people heard him gladly." His followers, for the most part, were among these. And, in general, the common people are more open to conviction, and more free from the influence of worldly prejudices and passions, than the rich and elevated and powerful: for "how can they believe, who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?"

In many cases, the people who rejoiced in what they saw and heard, afterwards fell away, and walked no more with him; and "Crucify" soon followed "Hosanna." The impression of recent mercies is often powerful, but not permanent. The goodness of many "is like the morning cloud, or the early dew, which soon passeth away." The Israelites often "sang his praise, but soon forgot his works."

But, however this may have been with the beholders of this miracle, let us be careful that it be not the case with us, but that we cordially and practically "rejoice for all the glorious things which have been done by him;" and which are "written for our learn-

ing, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope." But "to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin;" for "unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required."

From hence we may see, *first*, how entitled the Lord Jesus is to our credence. He is not only able and willing to save and to bless, but he is infinitely authorized to do it, "for him hath God the Father sealed." "The works," therefore saith he, "that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin." His miracles were not mere displays of power to make men wonder. They were suited to the condition and the wants of men; and always had an end in view worthy of their execution; and they were, in every instance, readily and perfectly distinguishable from the lying wonders of superstition. They were repeated and multiplied. They were performed publicly; before enemies as well as friends; in the road, in the synagogues, and on Sabbath days.

Hence and forever from my heart
I bid my doubts and fears depart;
And to those hands my soul resign,
Which bear credentials so divine.

Secondly, we see what claims the Saviour has to our confidence. He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever." What he did when on earth, he is surely able to do in heaven. What he did for the body, he can do for the soul. Say not, "O that I could have access to him! but he is no more in the

world; and the heavens have received him until the restitution of all things." Though he is no longer here corporeally, he is here really, spiritually, divinely; "a very present help in trouble." You are nearer to him now, than this woman was in the synagogue. No case is below his notice. No distress is beyond his reach. "He will not despise the prayer of the destitute, but will regard their prayer."

Finally, we see how deserving he is, not only of our credence and confidence, not only of our admiration and praise, but of our imitation. Let us, therefore, seek to resemble him. "Let the same mind be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus;" being "followers of him, as dear children." We know you cannot perform miracles, but you can show mercy. You cannot, like him, raise the dead, recover the sick, and relieve the deformed; but you can "weep with them that weep;" you can secure "the blessing of him that was ready to perish;" you can "cause the widow's heart to sing for joy;" you can resemble him who "went about doing good;" and "he that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

LECTURE XXI.

MAR THA A N D M A R Y.

Now it came to pass as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesns answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.—LUKE x. 38-42.*

BIOGRAPHY is a species of history peculiarly interesting and useful. And in this the Bible excels. The sacred writers deseribe to the very life. They fear no displeasure; they conceal no imperfection; they spare no censure.

And while they discover their impartiality, they equally prove their wisdom and prudence. This appears from the examples they delineate. What are philosophers, politicians, heroes, to the generality of man-

* This Lecture has been previously published, in the Author's "Short Discourses for the Use of Families;" but as it originally formed a part of the present series, it is deemed proper to include it in this volume.

kind? They may excite wonder, but they cannot produce imitation. They may indulge curiosity, but they cannot furnish motives, encouragements, cautions. But here we are led into private life; we contemplate ordinary scenes; we see goodness in our own relations and circumstances. We behold blemishes which *we* are to shun, excellencies which *we* are to pursue, advantages which *we* are to acquire.

Thus the Scripture becomes not a glaring comet, but "a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path."

Pass we to the narrative before us.

But previous to our advancing some general reflections from the whole passage, it will be necessary to take notice of the characters here mentioned; and to see wherein the one was to be censured, and the other to be commended.

Perhaps it is needless to premise that both these females were good women. It is expressly said, that "Jesus loved Martha," as well as Mary. And we are informed that when our Saviour was coming to Bethany, after the death of Lazarus, "Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him, but Mary sat still in the house." These two sisters did not differ in their religious character, as Jacob and Esau; Saul and David; Peter and Judas; but only, one of them was less influenced by her principles *in this instance* than the other; for our Lord does not condemn her general conduct, but her present action; and even this he does not censure absolutely, but comparatively. Some things may be said in commendation of Martha, and others in extenuation.

She discovered a noble freedom from the fear of

man—"she received him into her house;" when it was well known that he was pursued by the heads of the Jewish nation. His entrance could not be hid; he had many with him. She also discovered kindness and hospitality in her concern to provide for our Lord and his disciples, and in deeming nothing too good for them. I like also her attention to the affairs of her own household. Though she was a woman of some consequence, she does not deem it beneath her to attend even to the economy of the table; yea, even to serve with her own hands when an emergency required. An affectation of state and of delicacy in the mistress of a family, has occasioned disorders, wastes, and embarrassments, which have ended in the ruin of many houses. The mother of Lemuel, in characterizing a wife, even for a prince, in those days —tells him, among other things—that "she riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens,"—that "she looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness."

Some things also may be said in excuse for Martha. She was the mistress of the house, and it was her province to provide. This appears to have been a sudden occurrence; many came in unawares; and perhaps she was unfurnished—and this would naturally create hurry, confusion, uneasiness.

But, after all that can be said in justification of Martha, our Saviour reproves her. She was therefore blameworthy; for his judgment is always according to truth. He could read the state of the mind; he could weigh motives; he could distinguish circumstances.

And from what he has mentioned, we may conclude that there was in her a considerable share of domestic vanity. I advert to that vanity which makes religion exclaim over thoughtless profusion, “Why is this waste? Are there no charities to sustain—are there no hungry wretches to feed—no naked ones to clothe?” I advert to that vanity which descends lower than pride in dress or furniture, which commonly attends wealth newly-acquired, and adheres to vulgar minds, incapable of discerning that simplicity is essential to elegance: a vanity whose empire is as large as the table; a vanity which collects all its praise from sordid appetite; a vanity which, while it entertains the body of a visitor, generally starves the mind.

The Shunamite, on a similar occasion, discovered much more good sense than Martha. She wished to entertain Elisha; but she considered character; she would not even suppose that a prophet of the Lord required splendor or luxury; she therefore said unto her husband, “Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick; and it shall be when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in hither.” But Martha, instead of a plain repast, “was cumbered about much serving;” and was all anxiety to furnish an entertainment which, while it was rendered unnecessary by the plainness and piety of the visitants, allowed her no degree of leisure, and engrossed all her time and attention. Thus she deprived herself of an opportunity to hear our Saviour’s discourse. This she should have prized. He was no ordinary teacher;

his stay was not likely to be of long continuance ; she knew not when the blessing would come again in her way.

This was not all. She rudely breaks in upon the devotion of the company, interrupts our Lord's discourse, condemns her sister as idle, and tries to involve our Saviour in the quarrel : "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone ? Bid her therefore that she help me." Here we see ill humor, fretfulness. She is "troubled about many things;" and, in her haste and heat, she loses the command of her temper and the government of her tongue.

But behold Mary. All reverence, all attention, all composure, feeding on the doctrine of eternal life—she "sat at his feet." She wisely and zealously improved the opportunity given her for the good of her soul. "This is my summer, my harvest ; let me redeem the time."

It must have distressed Mary to hear her sister so passionately complain of her ; and many a one in her circumstances would have replied, "Why could she not have called me aside, and have spoken to me alone ? Why expose me before the whole house ? If I have not been so attentive to other things, surely the occasion will plead some excuse." But not a word of this nature. The calm silence of this good woman seems to say, "I leave my defence to him. He is near that justifieth me." Nor was she mistaken. He more than vindicates ;—he applauds her preference ; and tells Martha that he will not comply with her demand, to send Mary to her assistance, but will suffer

her to remain listening at his feet, and still enjoying the privilege she had chosen. It is the meaning of his declaration when he said; “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

But what is here said of a particular instance of pious disposition will apply to religion at large. To render this passage of Scripture, therefore, more generally useful, let me call upon you,

I. TO CONSIDER THE DILIGENCE OF THE SAVIOUR IN THE IMPROVEMENT OF TIME. He goes about doing good. His lips drop as the honeycomb. He always pays for his entertainment. In the parlor as well as the temple, he furnishes admonition and counsel. No sooner does he enter this house than we find him teaching.

Let us follow his example. Ministers should not be backward to speak unless before large and public assemblies. The Apostles, like their Saviour, not only taught publicly, but “from house to house.” Christians should labor to be useful wherever they are: every place, every company, should be the better for them. They should render friendly, and even ordinary visits edifying. Religion is not to be confined to the Church or the Sabbath. It is not to be a dress, which you may assume or lay aside at pleasure: it is a nature; a life. It is to keep us “in the fear of the Lord all the day long:” to enter business with us; to attend us in all our common actions; and to teach us that “whether we eat or drink, or

whatsoever we do, we should do it to the glory of God." Hence we are commanded to "comfort one another; to exhort one another; to provoke one another to love, and to good words, and so much the more as we see the day approaching." But, alas! who does not stand reprobated and condemned? "Are we not carnal, and walk as men?" Do we "redeem the time, because the days are evil"? Does "no communication proceed out of our mouth, but such as is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers"? Shall "vain words never have an end"?—"A word fitly spoken, how good is it! it is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

II. OBSERVE HOW IMPROPER IT IS FOR A FOLLOWER OF THE LORD JESUS TO BE SENSUAL AND SELFISH. Mary, who hears his word, pleases him better than Martha, who prepares his meal: yea, Martha even grieves him by her assiduity to entertain him. He would rather feed than be fed. He "pleased not himself." He shunned every kind of self-indulgence. He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." And, calling ourselves by his name, are we faneiful? are we finical? are we fond of giving trouble? are we slaves to our appetites? are we desirous of dainty meat? "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts."

Especially should ministers be like-minded with their Lord and Master. They often at least occasion excess, and draw upon themselves reflection. The

preparations made to receive them would imply a fondness for extravagance, variety, delicacy. Let them attest their innocence. Let them show their people that they seek not theirs, but them. Let them, by their words and actions, discountenance parade and excess. Are circumstances of this kind beneath our attention? Is it not one of the lessons which the passage before us is designed to teach? When our Saviour sent forth his Apostles, did not his admonitions turn principally upon this subject? For things, in themselves of less importance than others, become weighty by their connections, their influence, their indications. A feather, or a straw, may serve to discover the direction of the wind, as well as a tree. What a fatal secret does that preacher betray, who shows that he minds earthly things!

III. WE SEE WHAT DIVERSITIES THERE ARE IN THE FOLLOWERS OF OUR LORD. Even the good ground brought forth in various proportions—thirty—sixty—an hundred fold. What a difference was there between the faith of the Centurion and of Thomas! Abraham and Lot were both righteous; but how imperfect does the nephew appear, compared with the uncle!

Many things diversify the degree and the exercises of religion. Thus the stations in which Providence places good men differ; one shall be favorable to devotion, another shall afford less leisure and create more distraction. Constitutional temperament also has its influence. Thus some Christians are more inclined to contemplation and the shades; others are formed for the active virtues. The difficulties which

chill the timid serve only to rouse and animate the bold and courageous. Religion, like water, partakes a little of the nature of the soil over which it runs. The very same truth was revealed both to Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel—The succession of the four monarchies. Nebuchadnezzar was a king and a conqueror; and admired things in proportion to their worldly grandeur. Accordingly he viewed these empires as an image whose brightness was excellent, the head of which was fine gold, and the subordinate parts of inferior metal. Daniel was a man of peace and of wisdom; and to him they appeared “as four great beasts, coming up out of the sea, diverse from each other: the first a lion with wings; the second a bear with three ribs in his mouth; the third a leopard with four wings of a fowl, and four heads; and the fourth dreadful and terrible, with great iron teeth.” Take an illustration from it. Imagine four persons—one phlegmatic, another choleric, a third sanguine, and the fourth melancholic. Drop religious truth into each of these—and do you suppose that it will not receive a tinge from each peculiar temperament? In all these cases something of the original character will remain. And I always view it as a considerable evidence of sincerity, when religion, if I may use the expression, acts naturally: it shows that people are off their guard; that they have not a particular part given them to act. For, were this the case, they would resemble one another much more nearly; and a dull, constrained uniformity would prevail. Thus it is with pretenders. If a man of humor profess religion without possessing it, he will keep a check upon himself; and,

by means of this, appear grave and formal ; but if he be really a partaker of religion, we should expect that his natural character will commonly show itself even in his duties ; it will indeed be regulated, but not destroyed.

IV. WE MAY MEET WITH HINDERANCES IN RELIGION FROM THOSE WHO SHOULD BE OUR ASSISTANTS. Such are friends and relations. A wife should cherish good impressions, fan the flame of devotion, and be a helper to her husband in spiritual as well as in temporal concerns—but she may prove a seducer : she may lead him into vanity and the dissipations of the world. Michal ridicules the holy joy of David. A brother may discourage a brother. A sister may reproach and repel a sister. Our foes may be those of our own household.

Yea, even by religious friends and relations we may sometimes be injured. Instead of making straight paths for our feet, they may throw stumbling blocks in our way. They may press “hard sayings,” before the mind is prepared to receive them. They may discourage us by their expressions of assurance and ecstasy. They may be wanting in sympathy. They may censure and condemn our actions, from ignorance of our circumstances and motives.

V. HOW ANXIOUS SOEVER WE MAY BE ABOUT MANY THINGS, ONE THING ALONE REALLY DESERVES OUR ATTENTION :—“one thing is needful.” It is, hearing the Saviour’s words ; it is an attention to the soul ; it is RELIGION. What, is nothing else necessary ?—

Yes; many things. But, compared with this, they are less than nothing and vanity. Other things are accidentally needful—this is essentially so. Other things are occasionally needful—this is invariably so. Other things are partially needful—this is universally so—needful for prosperity and adversity; needful for the body and the soul; needful for time and eternity. Some things are needful for some individuals, but not for others; but this is needful for all: needful for kings and subjects; needful for rich and poor; needful for old and young.

If indeed we judge of it by the people of the world, we shall not think so when we look around us. The many seem to be prizes and pursuing everything in preference to this. Instead of viewing it as essential to man, they seem only to regard it as a circumstance of his being and his welfare, which may safely be dispensed with. But let us take the testimony of God. What saith the Scripture? “Wisdom is the principal thing: therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.” “Yes,” says the Saviour, “one thing is needful.” Hence we find David and Paul reducing every concern into one. “ONE thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.” This ONE thing I do; forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.”

Finally. It is worthy of our remark, that REAL GODLINESS IS NOT ONLY A NECESSARY, BUT A DURABLE ACQUISITION. "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Permanency adds bliss to bliss. Some things are not worth preservation; but an invaluable treasure, a thing absolutely needful, will awaken all our concern, and we shall be anxious not only to possess it, but also to retain it.

And what a difference is there in this view, between religion and other advantages! Nothing that we here possess can be called our own. What we acquire with so much difficulty it is impossible to secure. If we choose honors, riches, pleasures, friendships, they will be sure to fail us, and to fail us often when we most need their aid. But the blessings we derive from godliness are our own forever. They are not liable to those numberless accidents which so easily deprive us of earthly possessions. No violence, no fraud, can rob us of them. "Our joy no man taketh from us." Our treasure "moth and rust cannot corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal." Even the desolations of death, which strip us of everything else, cannot touch the believer's portion: he can carry all his goods along with him into another world, where they will be forever increasing. It is an "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Surely religion is wisdom—and "wisdom is justified of all her children."

This review, therefore, should more than satisfy those who, like Mary, *have* chosen this good part. Your choice will bear re-consideration. The more

you examine it, the more worthy of all your regard will it appear. Be not ashamed to own it. Let religion be your boast, as well as your comfort. What is there to excite a blush? What, in importance and continuance, are the pursuits and acquisitions of the most admired of your fellow-creatures, compared with yours?

It should also influence those who have *not* made it. And, Oh that I could induce you to decide, and to decide *this evening!* I say, this evening, because you are not sure of another season. I say, this evening, because every delay adds to the difficulty of your choice. I say, this evening, because there is nothing so urgent; nothing that can equally claim or reward your attention.

Should you be induced to "neglect this great salvation," what will be your reflections in a dying hour, and before the bar of God? What will you think in endless misery of those follies and vanities for which you sacrificed eternal life? "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

He who approved an applauded Mary's choice is here this evening to witness yours. He sees you, he hears you; he is waiting to be gracious, and exalted to have mercy upon you. You must sit at his feet as a disciple, or be made his footstool as an enemy. What is the choice you intend to make? "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

LECTURE XXII.

L O T ' S W I F E .

Remember Lot's wife.—LUKE xvii. 32.

THE people of Sodom were proverbially wicked above all men. Provoked by their abominations, God resolved to take vengeance. But shall he hide from Abraham the thing which he will do? Abraham being informed, immediately became an intercessor; but so general was the corruption, that not ten righteous persons could be found there.

In the evening before the threatened destruction, two angels came to Lot, as he was sitting in the gate of Sodom. These were appointed to be the executioners; and after themselves observing some of the crying enormities of the place, as if they could no longer endure the scene, they said unto Lot; “Hast thou here any besides? Son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it.”

Apprized of the impending evil, and full of affectionate anxiety and dread, “ Lot went out, and spake unto his sons-in-law who married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place ; for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed unto them as one that mocked.”

“ And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, who are here ; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. And while he lingered, the man laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters ; the Lord being merciful unto him : and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life ; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain ; escape to the mountains, lest thou be consumed.”

“ But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt :”—petrified into a substance which would endure the assaults of time. Josephus declares that he saw it standing in his days. But what has now become of it ?

The statue is no longer visible to the eye of sense ; but it can be yet seen by the eye of faith. Here it is, in “ the word of the Lord, which endureth forever.” Let us solemnly approach it, and read the motto with which it is inscribed : “ REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE !”

This motto was inscribed by the Lord himself ; and requires us to consider three things :—THE SIN :—THE PUNISHMENT :—THE ADMONITION.

1. THE SIN. “ She looked back from behind him.”

And was this so criminal a deed? In answer to this, we observe, that sins are not to be judged of only or principally by their grossness, but by their guilt; that their guilt arises from their aggravations; and that their aggravations arise from circumstances which often fall not under our cognizance, but are subject only to the judgment of God, who “seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.”

In the Scriptures we frequently find crimes apparently trivial, followed with direful inflictions; and why?—Because what appears trivial to us, is an abomination in the sight of God. Is he not “a God of knowledge, by whom actions are weighed”? Is he not merciful? and would he punish a slight offence with a tremendous severity? “Is there unrighteousness with God? How then shall God judge the world? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

What was involved in this retrospection?

Her looking back betrayed *Idle and Wanton Curiosity*. We are far from supposing that curiosity is peculiar to the female sex; yet it may be allowed that there is no want of this property in their composition. Lot’s wife’s curiosity destroyed herself. Dinah’s curiosity destroyed a city. Eve’s curiosity destroyed a world.

The Scriptures never encourage curiosity. When a man asked our Lord, “Are there few that shall be saved?” “Instead of seeking to know this,” replied our Saviour, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and

shall not be able." When Peter, not satisfied with being informed of his own destiny and duty, wished to pry into those of John, and asked: "Lord, and what shall this man do?" he answered, "What is that to thee? follow thou me."

Let us guard against the intemperance of speculation. Paul reproves the man who "intrudes into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." "The secret things," says Moses, "belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children." Prying into the affairs of our neighbors is often impertinent and injurious; but prying into the deep things of God is presumptuous and sinful. Let us acquiesce in the limits which reason and revelation have fixed to our inquiries. Let us be satisfied with plain and practical truth; and with things clear and important. The religious controversies, which have exhausted so much attention, and spoiled so much temper, have commonly turned upon matters too obstruse for human comprehension, or too unprofitable to merit regard.

Again, this looking back betrayed *Unbelief*. She not only wished to see *how* the thing was to be done, but whether it would be *done at all*. The threatening had declared that the place should be destroyed by fire and brimstone; but whence should these come? Who had ever heard of such a rain as this? She therefore questions the thing, and looks back to see whether the menace is fulfilled.

Circumstances appeared to excite and favor her suspicion. There seemed no probability of the event.

The sun had risen upon the earth ; the sky was clear ; the elements foreboded no change ; she could not therefore think that so large a city, full of inhabitants, and all the adjacent plains, could be immediately desolated, without any previous indication.

And does not this remind us of the language of Peter, “There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming ? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation :”—thus fetching arguments against revelation from nature and providence ; and lulling themselves into fancied security, “crying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace.”

There is always enough in the constitution and dispensation of things around us to try our faith in God’s word ; and to render it a moral, as well as an intellectual exercise. But, with regard to all that is revealed, we ought to say with Paul, in another case, “I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.” For this shall assuredly be the case, however unlikely the accomplishment may appear, or whatever difficulties may stand in the way.

God had threatened Babylon with destruction ; but she said, “I shall be a lady for ever, and shall see no sorrow.” Therefore God declared by his Prophet, “Evil shall come upon thee ; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth : and mischief shall fall upon thee ; thou shalt not be able to put it off : and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know.” And was it not so ? Most exactly and minutely ; for in one night a walled city, so strong

that it seemed impossible to enter it, and so stored with provisions that it was hopeless to think of reducing it by famine, was at once taken and destroyed.

When Joshua took Jericho, “he burned the city with fire and all that was therein;” and he said, “Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it.” For several hundred years this tremendous curse seemed to be a dead letter; but when, in the impious reign of Ahab, the city was rebuilt by Hiel, for his daring impiety he suffered the fearful penalty that had been denounced: for, says the sacred historian, “He laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his first-born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.”—“Be not faithless, but believing.”

Further, this looking back betrayed *Disobedience*. It was a presumptuous disregard of God’s express order. The injunction given to Lot was perfectly plain; “Look not behind you.” His wife had probably heard this when uttered by the angel himself; or if not, it had certainly been repeated to her by her husband. She could not, therefore, be ignorant of the command; but she was unconcerned about it. The command was reasonable in itself, it was easy of performance, and it regarded her own welfare; yet she contemned it, and she “looked back.”

All pretensions to religion without obedience are vain and useless. “If we know these things, happy are we,” only, “if we do them.” When Saul spared

Agag, and the best of the spoil, contrary to the express command of God, though under a specious pretence, Samuel said, "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king."

Yet who escapes this charge of disobedience? Sinner, does not your conscience testify against you, that you have, not only in a particular case, but in a general, a constant course of action, disobeyed "the voice that speaketh from heaven"? If God were to make pillars of salt of all those who live in opposition to his revealed will, we should find no place for the soles of our feet.

Again, her action betrayed *Ingratitude*. Favors conferred demand suitable returns. David, therefore, asks, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" And he could say, "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord, now, in the presence of all his people."

Many persons, when God has appeared for them, feel grateful for the time; and even the Jews, upon their various deliverances, would sing his praise, and bless his name. But this woman was void of every grateful feeling; for how striking and distinguishing was the Lord's favor in saving herself, and her husband, and their daughters, from the horrible over-

throw; in saving them only; and in providing a Zoar for their security and accommodation? Yet all this seems as nothing in her eyes; and instead of saying, "What return can we make for mercy such as this? shall we, after experiencing such a deliverance, break his commands?" she immediately incurs the guilt of the most daring opposition to his will.

Again, her looking back betrayed *attachment to a place, wicked and devoted to destruction.* She lamented her loss, and wished to regain what she had left. Our Lord intimates this when he says, "In that day, he who shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away; and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife."

The situation and scenery of Sodom were delightful; and all around was pleasant, and fertile as the garden of the Lord. There were the companions and friends congenial with her feelings. There were the haunts of amusement and dissipation in which her soul delighted. Ye endeared objects and attractions! must I leave you forever? If Lot had then addressed her, as Naomi addressed her daughters-in-law, "Turn again, why will ye go with me?" she would have availed herself of the license; and, after embracing him, would have gladly returned; and have settled in Sodom, had it been remaining: or, if her relationship to her husband and daughters had prevented this, there she would have been *in intention and desire.* Just as the Israelites are said to have "turned back" into Egypt, in their heart; though they never actually marched back; so it was with

Lot's wife; her soul was in Sodom, though her body was in the plain.

Thus she stands, a representative of those who love the present evil world. The command is, "Arise ye, and depart hence; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction." It is a sink of sin, and "lieth in wickedness." It is unworthy of your regard, not only as it is vain and wicked, but also because it "is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." Whatever happiness you may hope to derive from its honors, riches, and attractions, it is a funeral pile, and all the works therein will soon be dissolved. Therefore, "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

See the character given of those who attach themselves to the world, and have no heart for God: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

View, then, the world properly, and "come out from it, and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing." Beware of a mere profession of godliness, while the heart is influenced by the world. In vain you profess to depart from it, and leave your souls behind. Henry, when dying, said to his physician three times, "Beware of the world;—beware of the world;—beware of the world." A hankering after it will prevent all religious decision; and in time will destroy every serious impression, and stifle every

holy conviction. "Demas," says the Apostle, "hath forsaken me, having loved this present world."

Again, in the action of Lot's wife, we see the *Image of an Apostate*. She began well, but she did not hold on. Our Saviour, therefore, uses her as the representative of those

Who walk the ways of God no more,
And make their own destruction sure.

"No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Of many it may be said, as it was of Ephraim; "Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it passeth away." Like the Galatians, they "did run well, but were hindered." They "began in the Spirit," but ended in the flesh. Many who once heard the Gospel with attention and delight, now treat it with neglect, and even insult. Many who once had the worship of God in their families, morning and evening, have now turned him out of doors, and are living, "without God in the world." Many are convinced, but not converted; reformed, but not renewed. But what is it to be "not far from the kingdom of heaven," and yet at last "shut out"? "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved;"—and only he. "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to

turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."

Observe again, *The sin of Lot's wife was enhanced by her Resisting the Force of Example.* Not even did either of her daughters look back; and her husband she saw, before her, obediently pressing onward; and by every step he took saying, "Follow me."

We ought to go forward in a good cause, even if we are without the company and countenance of others; yet it is an advantage to see others preceding us in the way; and it is an aggravation of criminality to disregard such excitements and encouragements. But even good, and eminent, and endeared examples, and although the observance of them may be enforced by influence and authority, are not sufficient of themselves to counteract sinful propensities. If nothing more were necessary, we should not have pious masters complaining of wicked servants; nor godly parents weeping over licentious children; nor ministers lamenting that they "have run in vain, and labored in vain."

Finally, *She employed Artifice and Hypocrisy in aid of her design.* It is not mentioned without reason, that "she looked back from behind him." She took this position, as knowing that there he could not observe her. By thus endeavoring to act secretly and unseen, she proved that she was convinced of the sinfulness of her action; and so she "condemned herself in the thing which she allowed."

It is a sad thing to fear restraint from evil, whereas we ought to deem every hinderance a benefit; a sad thing to wish for license and liberty to sin, which is

to put ourselves into the way of temptation. If we are inflammable, we should not go near sparks. Though Judas must have been aware of his covetous disposition, he desired to carry the bag, and bear what was put therein. And in like manner, this woman evinced her folly as well as her guilt. Had she been concerned to avoid transgressing the divine commandment, she would not have placed herself in a situation favorable to the committing of the sin; but, instead of falling behind her husband, she would have walked before him, or have kept by his side. Thus, she succeeded in eluding the notice of her husband; for while he was attentive to his own safety, and supposed that she was equally attentive to hers, he saw her not; yea, he could not see her without looking back, and so exposing himself. But while holding her crime from the eyes of Lot, she could not conceal it from Him, whose "eyes are as a flame of fire." "There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." "Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering."

We have seen the *Sin of Lot's wife*; let us now view,

II. HER PUNISHMENT. "She looked back from behind him, and she became a *Pillar of Salt*."

"Sin and sorrow," says Bacon, "are bound to each other by an adamantine chain." God himself cannot break that chain. He does not break it even with regard to those who are pardoned and saved; for if *they* live, their ransom died. "Christ has re-

deemed them from the curse of the law," by being "made a curse for them."

In all well-ordered governments crimes are punished; and shall they escape in the empire of God? Is he not "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity"? Is he not "righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works"? As the moral ruler of the universe, he is concerned to maintain order, and sin is the violation of that order: he is determined to secure the welfare of the universe, and sin is the destruction of that welfare. His "wrath, therefore, is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men:"—revealed in the Scriptures of truth;—in the apprehensions of conscience;—and in the penalties actually inflicted upon communities, families, and individuals. He is bound by oath not to spare the guilty, and "he cannot deny himself."

"And she became a pillar of salt." The punishment has four characters.

First, It was *Sudden*. She looked, and in a moment her body was lifeless;—her soul, where?—In a general way, God is long-suffering, "not willing that any should perish?" and his long-suffering is designed to "lead to repentance." But "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Yet, surely, divine patience should not excite a hope of impunity.

"The wages of sin is death;" and sometimes the workman is paid *immediately*. The sinner is sometimes surprised in the very act of iniquity. Herod, in the elation of pride and vanity, "was smitten by

an angel, and was eaten of worms." Nebuchadnezzar "walked in his palace in the kingdom of Babylon. And he spake and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty? *While the word was in his mouth*, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; thy kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. The *same hour* was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws." Belshazzar made an impious feast, and was profaning the vessels of the sanctuary. "In the *same hour* came forth fingers of a man's hand," writing his doom; and "*in that night* was Belshazzar slain." The lie of Gehazi was instantly punished with leprosy; and Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead as soon as they had uttered their falsehood.

Be not, therefore, secure; the avenger may come at an hour when you are not aware. The next time you call for God to damn your soul, he may directly answer your prayer. The next time you are intoxicated, you may stagger into hell. How brittle is your frame, and how numberless are the accidents and diseases to which you are exposed. "He that being often re-

proved, hardeneth his neck, shall *suddenly* be destroyed, and that without remedy."

Secondly, The Punishment was Strange. There had been nothing like it before ; there has been nothing like it since. Every judgment of God is called "his strange work :" and he is said to "come out of his place," when he "punishes the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity :" for "*mercy*" is his "*seat*."

But sometimes, to surprise and alarm a world unimpressed by his ordinary operations, he invests his dealings with a novel attribute or appearance, in order to give them effect. "Is not," says Job, "destruction to the wicked ? and a *strange* punishment to the workers of iniquity?" We are not always to infer the guilt of men from their peculiar sufferings ; as our Lord teaches us with regard to the "eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell ;" and the worshippers "whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices." Yet singular crimes are sometimes followed with as singular visitations ; so that men are constrained to say, "Verily there is a reward for the wicked : verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth."

What various and *singular* plagues did God bring upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians ; and what *surprising* calamities were also inflicted upon the Jews. Although such instances of extraordinary punishment are less common now than they were formerly, because less necessary under the present dispensation ; they do still sometimes occur, and in such a manner as to leave us unable to withstand the conviction, "this is the finger of God."

Do not imagine that God can punish you, only as he has punished others. Fear, which magnifies all other evils, here falls short. "Who knoweth the power of his anger?" His capacity for punishing is boundless. His treasures of wrath are inexhaustible. Every creature, from an archangel to a worm, is ready to avenge him of his adversaries. Think in how many parts thou art vulnerable. Every faculty of thy soul, every particle of thy frame, opens a passage to misery. Thy imagination can torment thee to distraction: a single thought may vex thee to death.

Thirdly, The Punishment was Ignominious. She was not only executed, but left, as it were, hung in chains, a public and lasting spectacle of aversion and horror. All sin is a disgraceful business; and though a man may glory in it for a time, it will sooner or later bring him to shame.

This is not unfrequently the case even in the present world. What disgraces have attached to some individuals even here! Their sins have found them out; and have deprived them of the esteem and confidence of mankind; and have only left them in society to be scorned and shunned. Take the intemperate. Drunkenness often covers a man with rags. Take the lewd. "A wound and dishonor shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away." Well does the Apostle ask, "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death." And truly does Daniel declare, "They shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt."

Fourthly, Her Punishment was Inevitable. As nothing could mitigate her offence, so nothing could prevent her doom. The advantages of relationship have sometimes been available; and so, Noah's family were saved for his sake. But although Lot was a just man, and variously honored of God, yet you see that he had no power to secure the wife of his bosom, however dear. It is only personal religion that can save us. Pious connections are blessings, but they are not our sureties for good. "Begin not," said John the Baptist, "to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father." The rich man in hell was a child of Abraham. And says the Saviour, "There shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out."

We proceed to notice, III. THE ADMONITION : "*Remember Lot's wife.*"

First, We learn from this, that *it is well to Instruct by Example.* Grammarians, and rhetoricians, and all teachers, in proportion as they are wise and wish to be useful, employ this method. Example is above precept; it shows us the possibility of the thing in the performance; and thus it reproves indolence, and encourages hope, and stimulates endeavor. God, who, in his word, "has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence," has therefore given us so much of the history and actions of the saints, and command us "not to be slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

But this is not all. We learn, *Secondly*, that *Bad Examples may be profitable*, as well as Good; and that threatenings, as well as promises; and judgments, as well as mercies, are not to be lost upon us. Hence they have been divinely registered. "Go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first; and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel." "Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? She is gone up upon every high mountain, and upon every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. They refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of Hosts" "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither let us tempt Christ as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

But, O the depravity and infatuation of mankind! "When," says Josiah, "thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness"—and such is their design, and such their adaptation:—but he adds: "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up they will not see." They turn away their eyes from everything that would awaken in

them a salutary alarm. “ I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning : yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.” “ Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink ; that continue until night, till wine inflame them ! And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts : but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.”

Thirdly, We learn hence, *The use and Importance of Memory.* Memory is not only a wonderful power, but it is the source of numberless pleasures and pains, and the instrument of unspeakable good or evil. Like every other faculty of the mind, it has been injured by the fall ; and the consequence is, that while we easily remember what we ought to forget, we as easily forget what we ought to remember. Hence a Puritan writer says, “ The memory is like the mill-sifter, that lets through the flour, and keeps in only the bran.” But as nothing can affect and influence us excepting as it is in the mind, and as we have so many calls and excitements to remembrance, let us pray that our memories may be renewed and strengthened.

“ Remember Lot’s wife.” We observe *Fourthly, That the meaning exceeds the expression.* Though it intends nothing less than remembrance, it requires much more. Be it, therefore, observed that there is a speculative remembrance, and there is a practical remembrance. The former is necessary to the latter, but is not sufficient without it, especially in all

moral and religious concerns. When Solomom says, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth;" he cannot mean a mere act of recollection, but such a remembrance of God as shall be productive of all those feelings, affections, and actions which he requires.

A man might be able to call to mind the case of Cain, and of Achan, and of Judas, and all the judgments recorded in the Bible, so that a preacher could say nothing on these subjects that would be new to him; and yet he may not "hear, and fear, and turn to the Lord." And of what avail will this be? Yea, it will be a curse instead of a blessing: for "to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." "He that knew his Lord's will, and did it not, should be beaten with many stripes."

Therefore, when you read "Remember Lot's wife;" say, I am not only to believe the fact, but to consider it, to apply it; I am to ask myself, what am I to learn from this awful event? and I am to pray, "Lord help me to lay it to heart, and prove it to be profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

THE END.



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